the Vampire Slayer™
VAMPYR
S. Fischetti

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 10 VOLUME 2

Praise for the stories contained in this volume:

"Love is in the air and one couple gets particularly close. A character study that's not a monster hunt, but it's another outstanding read for this series."

—SciFiPulse

"Christos Gage and Rebekah Isaacs's understanding of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* encapsulates what fans love about the show. It's an unabashed love letter and the passion and care they put into it is what lets fans who loved to watch *Buffy* also love to read it . . . a wonderful blend of witty humor, tense drama, and kinetic action."

—Infinite Comix

"The great thing about having Rebekah Isaacs on art is the down to Earth approach she takes to drawing these characters. It's the little things that matter . . . That takes creativity to pull off consistently."

—Geeked Out Nation

Buffy
the Vampire Slayer™

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 10 VOLUME 2

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This story takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9, created by Joss Whedon.

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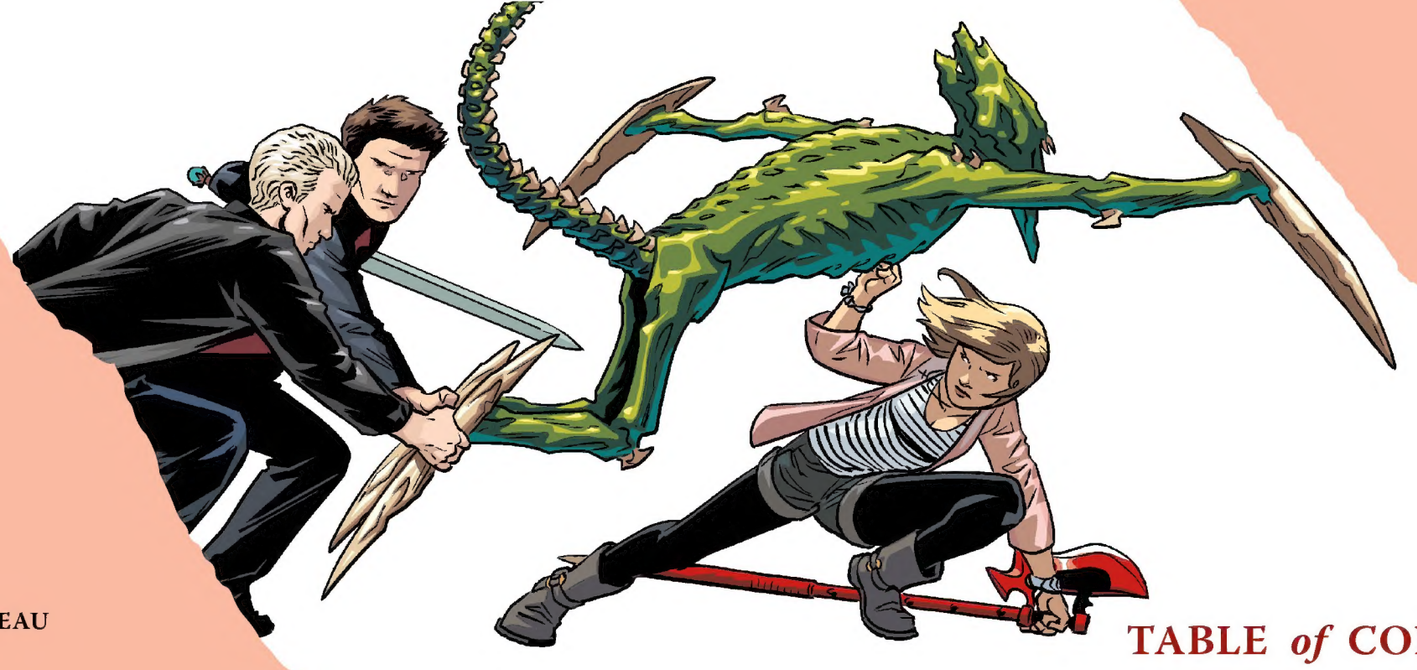

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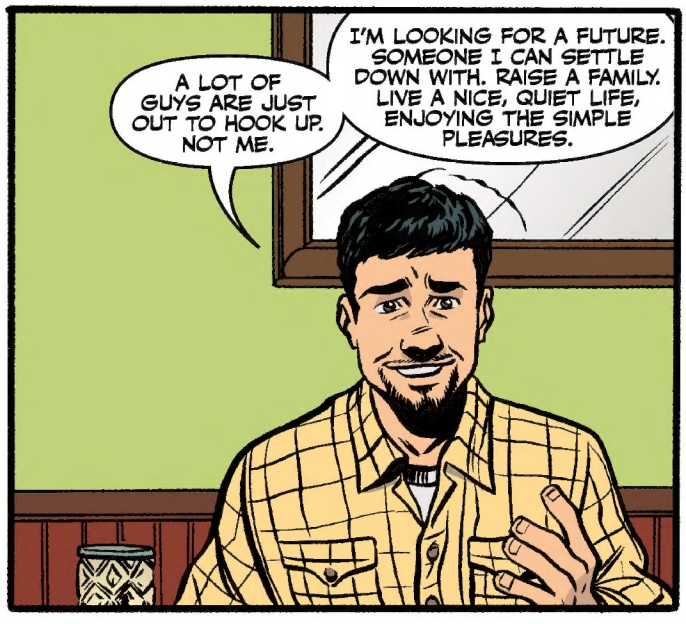
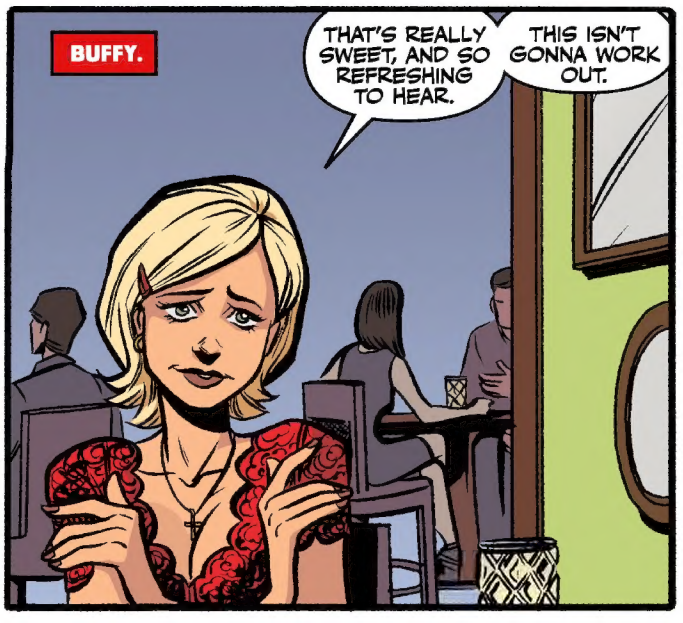
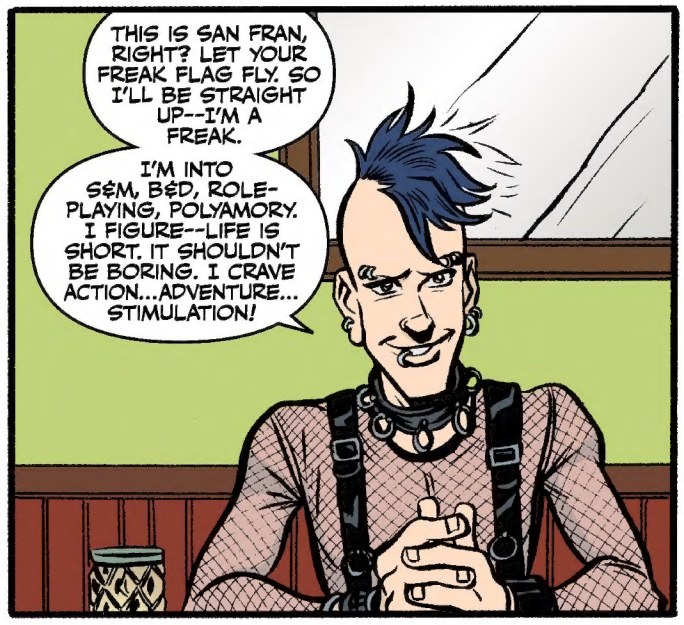
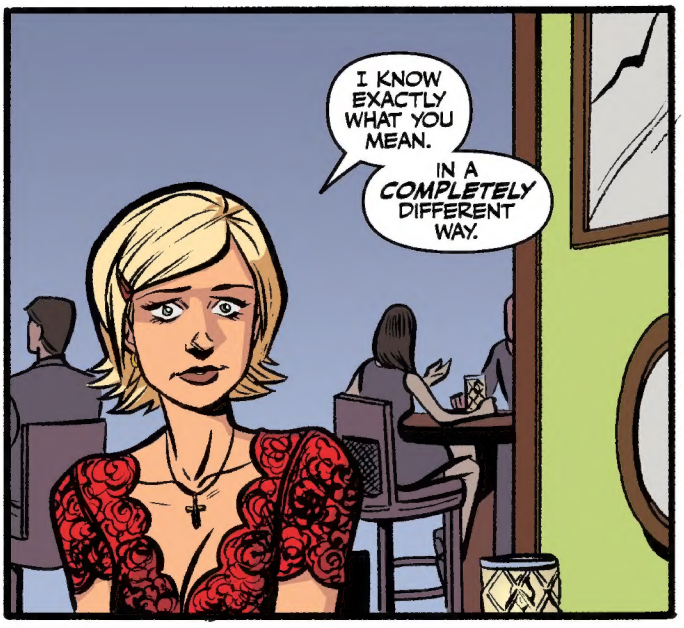
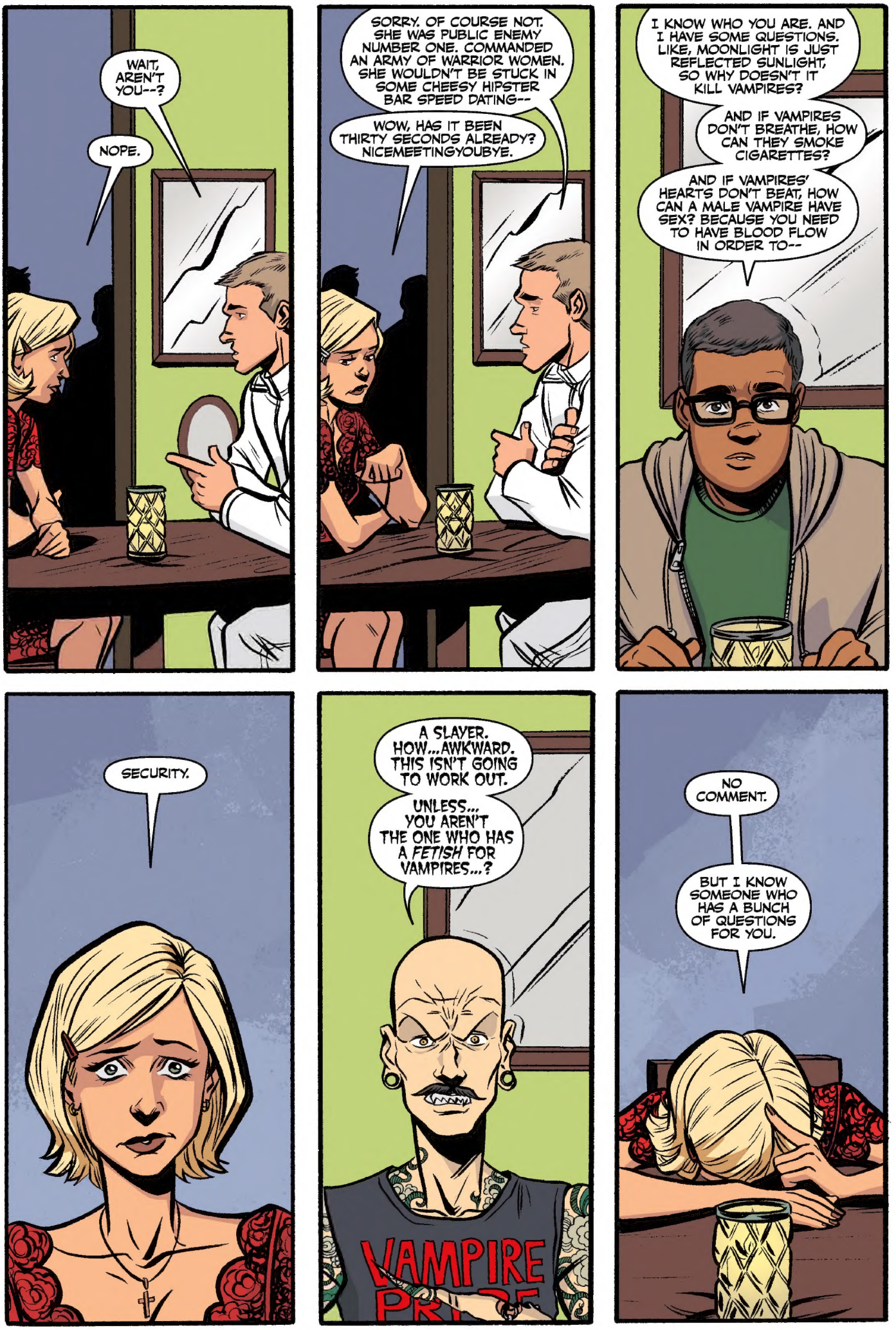
LOVE DARES YOU
PART ODE


A LOT OF GUYS ARE JUST OUT TO HOOK UP. NOT ME.
I'M LOOKING FOR A FUTURE. SOMEONE I CAN SETTLE DOWN WITH. RAISE A FAMILY. LIVE A NICE, QUIET LIFE, ENJOYING THE SIMPLE PLEASURES.

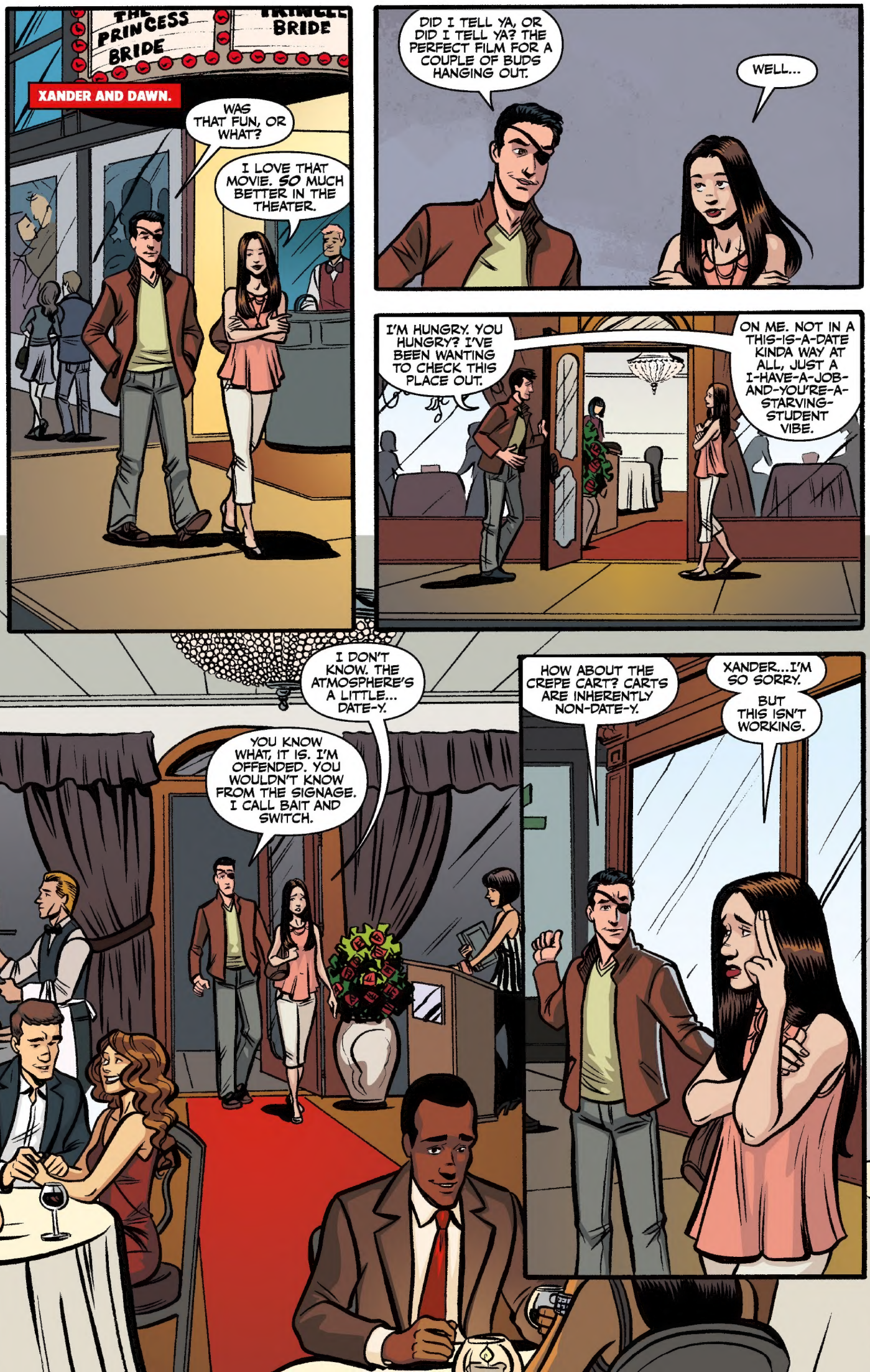

BUFFY.
THAT'S REALLY SWEET, AND SO REFRESHING TO HEAR.
THIS ISN'T GONNA WORK OUT.

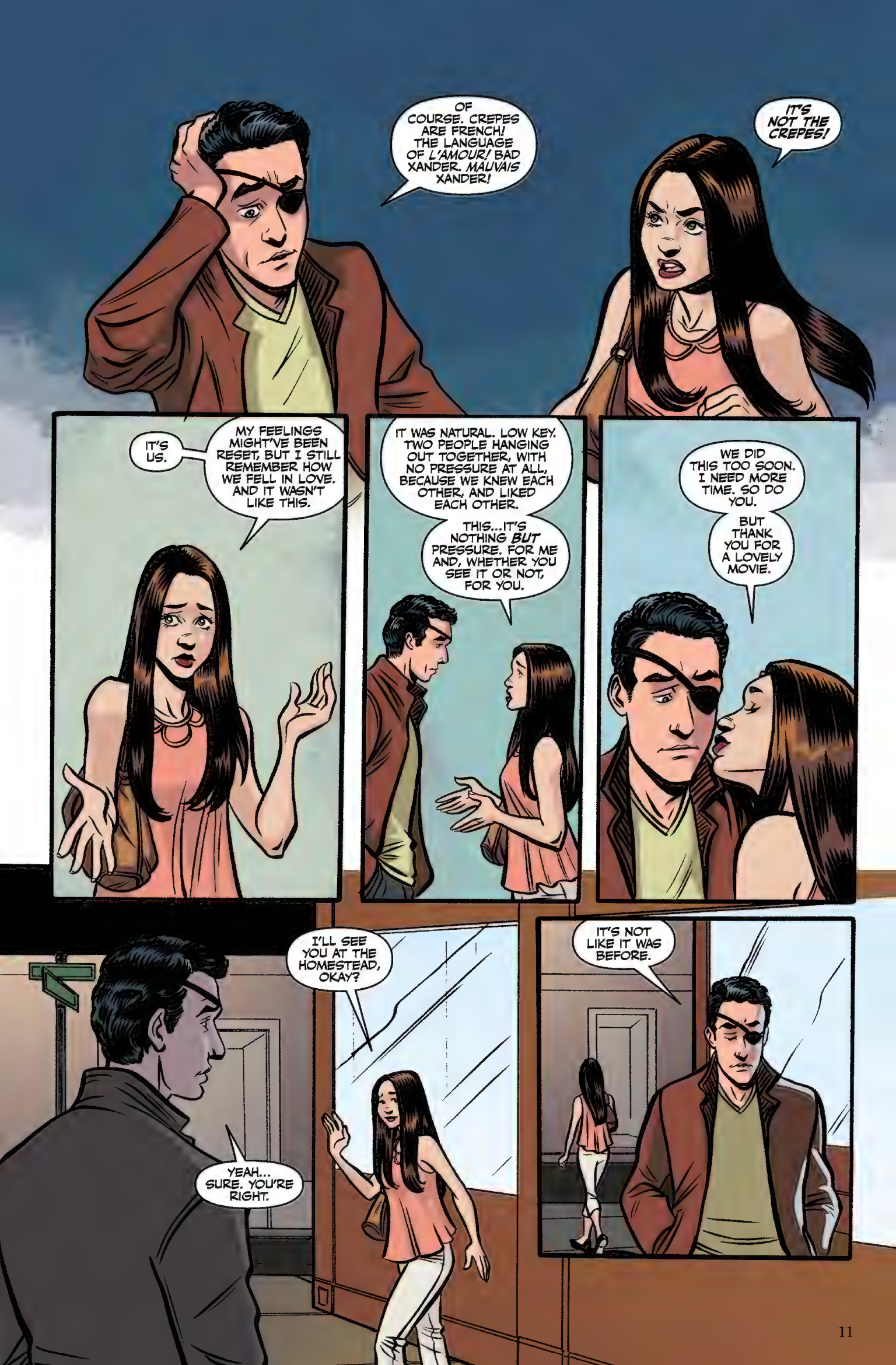

THIS IS SAN FRAN, RIGHT? LET YOUR FREAK FLAG FLY. SO I'LL BE STRAIGHT UP--I'M A FREAK.
I'M INTO S&M, B&D, ROLE-PLAYING, POLYAMORY. I FIGURE--LIFE IS SHORT. IT SHOULDN'T BE BORING. I CRAVE ACTION...ADVENTURE... STIMULATION!


I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN.
IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY.


WAIT, AREN'T YOU--?
NOPE.
SORRY. OF COURSE NOT. SHE WAS PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE. COMMANDED AN ARMY OF WARRIOR WOMEN. SHE WOULDN'T BE STUCK IN SOME CHEESY HIPSTER BAR SPEED DATING--
WOW, HAS IT BEEN THIRTY SECONDS ALREADY? NICEMEETINGYOUBYE.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. AND I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS. LIKE, MOONLIGHT IS JUST REFLECTED SUNLIGHT, SO WHY DOESN'T IT KILL VAMPIRES?
AND IF VAMPIRES DON'T BREATHE, HOW CAN THEY SMOKE CIGARETTES?
AND IF VAMPIRES' HEARTS DON'T BEAT, HOW CAN A MALE VAMPIRE HAVE SEX? BECAUSE YOU NEED TO HAVE BLOOD FLOW IN ORDER TO--
SECURITY.
A SLAYER. HOW...AWKWARD. THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK OUT.
UNLESS... YOU AREN'T THE ONE WHO HAS A *FETISH* FOR VAMPIRES...?
VAMPIRE
NO COMMENT.
BUT I KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS A BUNCH OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

YOU ARE HER! SO AWESOME TO MEET YOU! I'M EDMUND. HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU.
I THINK YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG IDEA.
NO, REALLY, GIVE ME A CHANCE. I'M EXTREMELY SELF-HATING.
DID YOU SAY YOU WERE BUFFY? THE BUFFY? YOU'RE EVEN HOTTER IN PERSON!
BACK OFF. I WAS HERE FIRST.
SHE'S A WOMAN, NOT A POSSESSION. CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE.
CHECK YOURS, YOU POSER SONOFA-- OW.
AAGH! OUR NIPPLE RINGS ARE CAUGHT!
AIIEE! WAIT, DON'T MOVE! WE HAVE TO DO THIS DELICATELY--
THAT'S IT. I'M DONE.
GGAAAA!
OH, RELAX. YOU'LL HEAL IN, LIKE, TWO SECONDS.
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE--I LIKE MY VAMPIRES WITH A LITTLE MORE SOUL AND A LITTLE LESS PORTLANDIA.
ALSO, SPEED DATING SUCKS.


XANDER AND DAWN.
THE PRINCESS BRIDE
THE PRINCESS BRIDE
WAS THAT FUN, OR WHAT?
I LOVE THAT MOVIE. SO MUCH BETTER IN THE THEATER.
DID I TELL YA, OR DID I TELL YA? THE PERFECT FILM FOR A COUPLE OF BUDS HANGING OUT.
WELL...
I'M HUNGRY. YOU HUNGRY? I'VE BEEN WANTING TO CHECK THIS PLACE OUT.
ON ME. NOT IN A THIS-IS-A-DATE KINDA WAY AT ALL, JUST A I-HAVE-A-JOB-AND-YOU'RE-A-STARVING-STUDENT VIBE.
I DON'T KNOW. THE ATMOSPHERE'S A LITTLE... DATE-Y.
YOU KNOW WHAT, IT IS. I'M OFFENDED. YOU WOULDN'T KNOW FROM THE SIGNAGE. I CALL BAIT AND SWITCH.
HOW ABOUT THE CREPE CART? CARTS ARE INHERENTLY NON-DATE-Y.
XANDER...I'M SO SORRY.
BUT THIS ISN'T WORKING.


OF COURSE. CREPES ARE FRENCH! THE LANGUAGE OF *L'AMOUR!* BAD XANDER. *MAUVAIS* XANDER!
IT'S NOT THE CREPES!
IT'S US.
MY FEELINGS MIGHT'VE BEEN RESET, BUT I STILL REMEMBER HOW WE FELL IN LOVE. AND IT WASN'T LIKE THIS.
IT WAS NATURAL. LOW KEY. TWO PEOPLE HANGING OUT TOGETHER, WITH NO PRESSURE AT ALL, BECAUSE WE KNEW EACH OTHER, AND LIKED EACH OTHER.
THIS...IT'S NOTHING *BUT* PRESSURE. FOR ME AND, WHETHER YOU SEE IT OR NOT, FOR YOU.
WE DID THIS TOO SOON. I NEED MORE TIME. SO DO YOU.
BUT THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY MOVIE.
I'LL SEE YOU AT THE HOMESTEAD, OKAY?
YEAH... SURE. YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'S NOT LIKE IT WAS BEFORE.

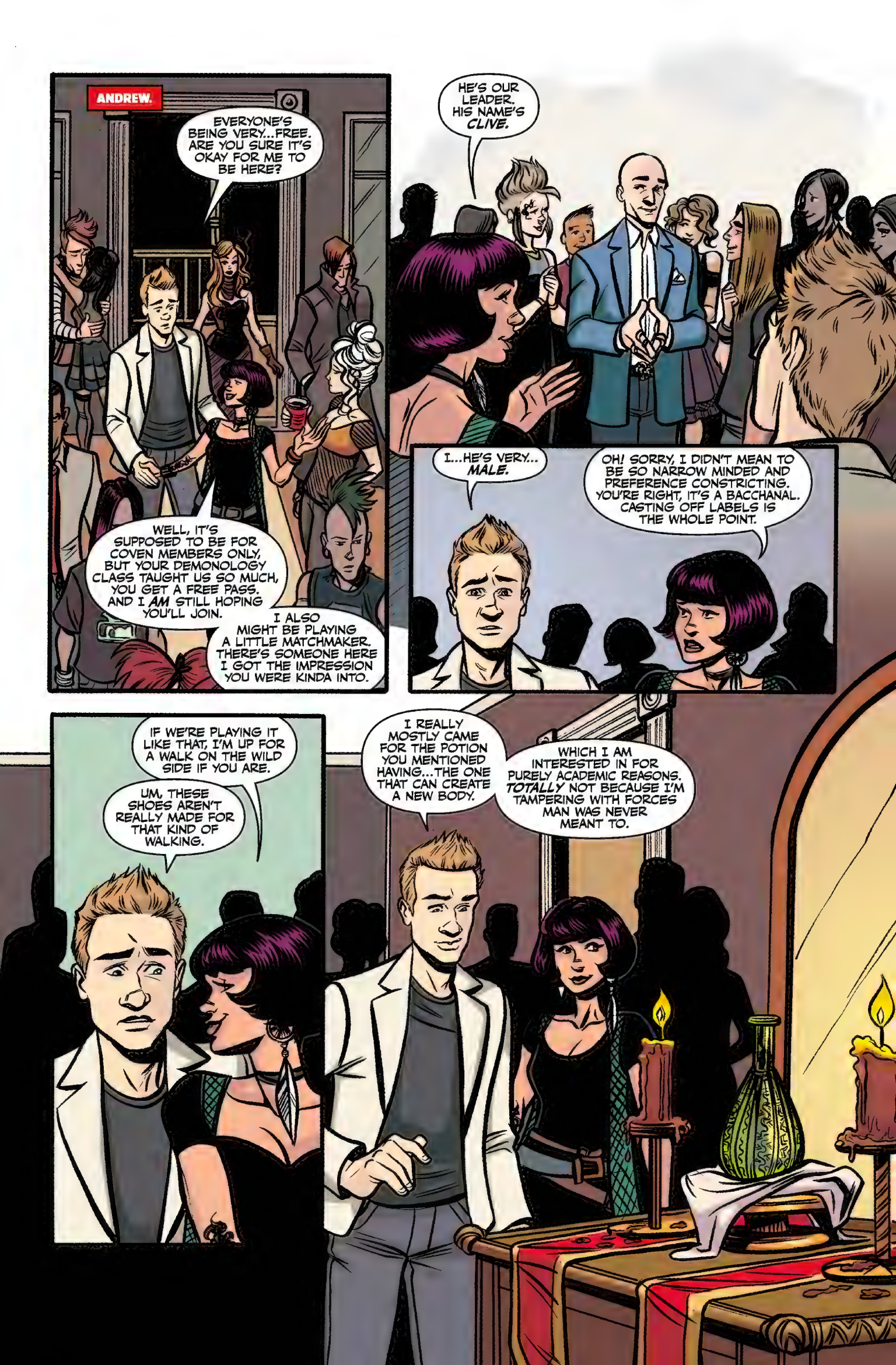
WILLOW.
OKAY, THIS IS DEFINITELY A LITTLE WEIRD.
HOW COULD IT BE ANYTHING ELSE?
WE'RE MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR HOME DIMENSION.
I MUST SAY, I EXPECTED IT TO BE MORE... MUNDANE.
HA. IT'S NOT ALL A WICCAN HOUSE PARTY, ALUWYN. THERE'S PLENTY OF MUNDANITY TO GO AROUND, TRUST ME.
WELL, I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU FOR A TOUR, ONCE WE'D CONCLUDED OFFICIAL BUSINESS...
...BUT IF IT'S AS BLAND AS YOU SAY, WE COULD STAY IN, INSTEAD.

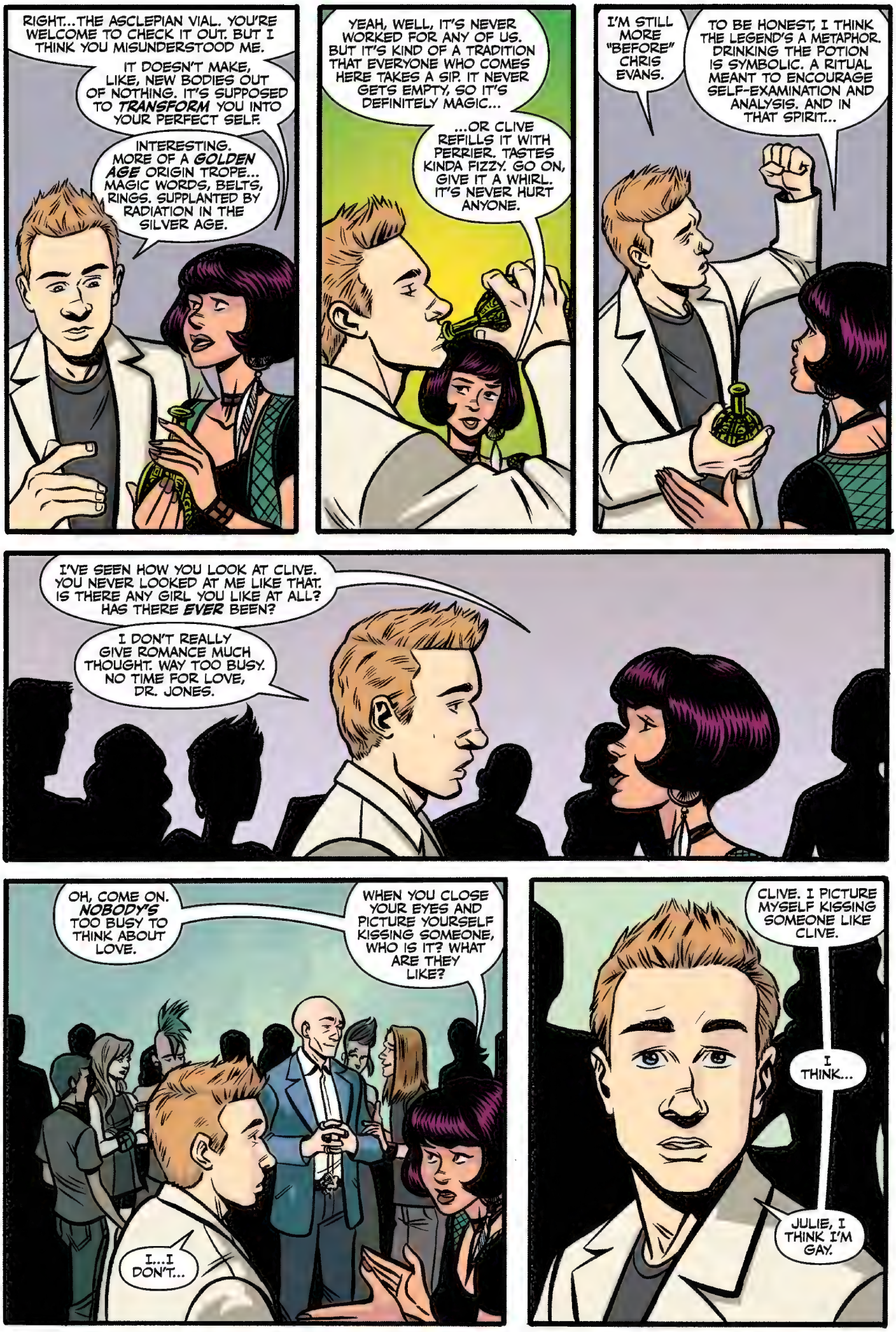
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING *STRATEGY.* COORDINATING WITH THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SUPERCOVEN.
WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO DISCUSS? YOU'RE USING YOUR MYSTIC BOOK TO SHAPE EARTH'S NEW RULES OF MAGIC. I CAN'T IMAGINE A BETTER CHOICE.
I'VE CONFIRMED THAT THE DIMENSIONAL BARRIERS BETWEEN YOUR WORLD AND THE MYSTIC REALMS ARE STRONG, FROM BOTH SIDES.
YEAH, BUT SOME EVIL DEMON LORDS GOT THROUGH.
HARDLY ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE FORMER STATE OF AFFAIRS. THEY'RE HIDING WELL, BUT THOSE TYPES ALWAYS MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN EVENTUALLY. WHEN THEY DO, YOU'LL DEAL WITH THEM.
DON'T TRY TO TRICK A TRICKSTER, WILLOW. IS SOMETHING WRONG?
WHEN WE PARTED, WE AGREED WE'D MEET AGAIN ONCE YOU'D RESTORED MAGIC HERE. TO SEE WHAT WE COULD BE TO EACH OTHER.
THINGS HAVE CHANGED BETWEEN US. YOU DON'T NEED A GUIDE ANY LONGER. YOU'RE SHAPING THE VERY MAGIC OF YOUR WORLD. WE'RE MORE EQUAL NOW... AND I *LIKE* THAT.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD, TOO.
I--I DO, I JUST...
I NEED TO SLOW DOWN. PROCESS ALL THIS.
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, OKAY?
I'M SORRY.

GILES.
NOK NOK
OH, PLEASE... PLEASE DON'T BE A SCAM. I SWEAR, IF THIS IS SOME SORT OF CATFISHING THING I WILL MURDER--
RUPERT?
HELLO, OLIVIA.
I, AH, MENTIONED IN MY E-MAILS THAT THERE'D BEEN SOME CHANGES...
I KNEW IT. LISTEN, KID, THIS IS NOT FUNNY. YOU'RE IMPERSONATING A MAN I CARED VERY MUCH ABOUT. I'M STILL NOT OVER HIS DEATH, AND--
MY GOD...
...RUPERT?
WE WERE MEANT TO BE GHOST HUNTING IN THE LANGHAM HOTEL. WE ENDED UP IN THE BAR, DRINKING CHEAP WINE AND SINGING CLASH SONGS. QUITE HORRIDLY AND FAR TOO LOUD.
THEN WE RENTED A ROOM WE COULDN'T AFFORD. AND IT WAS MORE THAN WORTH THE COST.

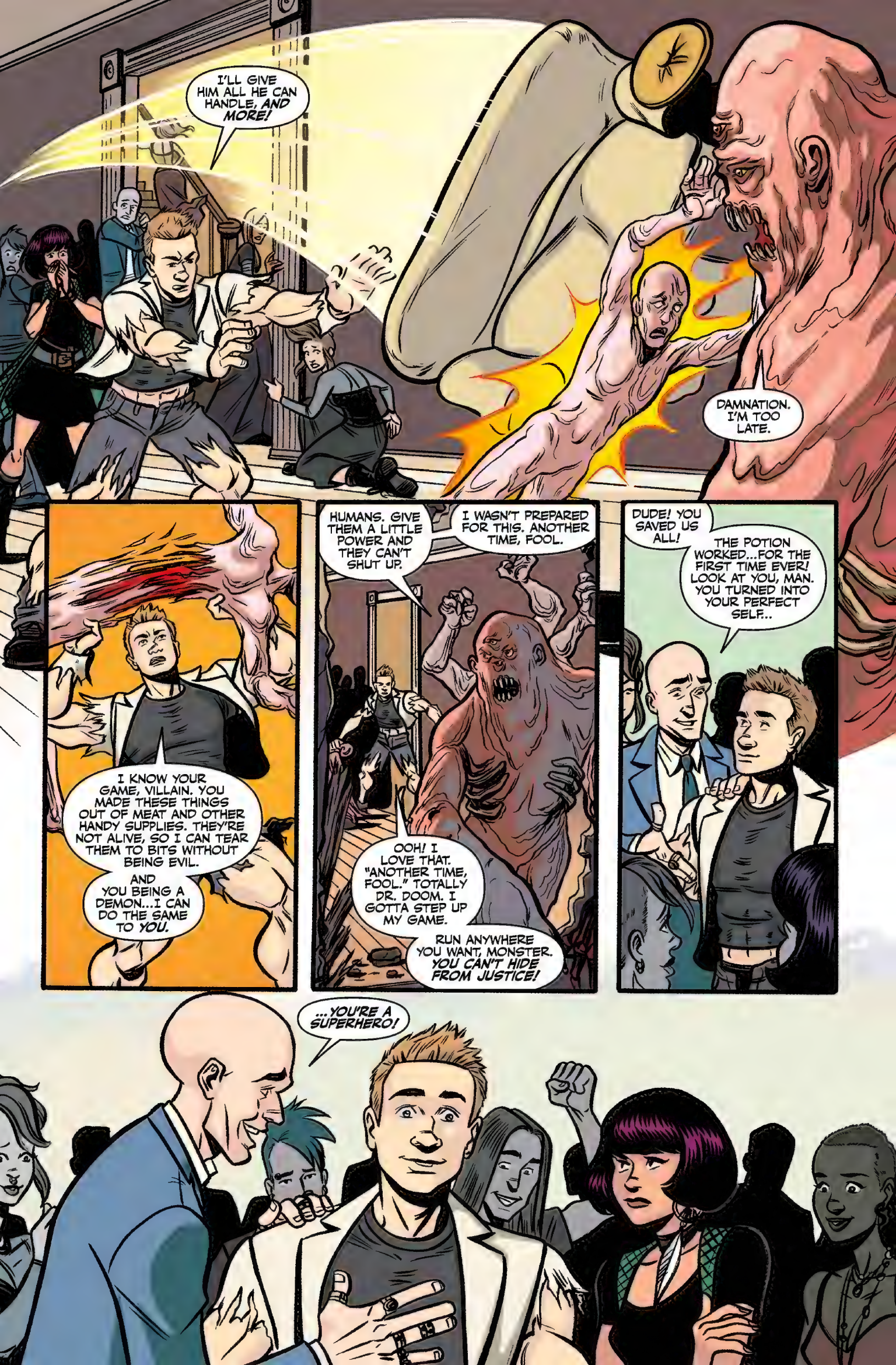
...SO THOSE OF US WITH PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN THE OCCULT ARE QUITE IN DEMAND NOW. I'M BASED IN L.A., BUT LIAISING WITH THE SAN FRANCISCO SUPERNATURAL CRIMES UNIT.
THEN YOU'LL BE COMING HERE OFTEN?
SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR, I'D IMAGINE.
LUCKY ME.
ARE YOU *MAD?*
I'M SORRY, I SHOULD HAVE ASKED IF YOU'RE SEEING ANYONE--
SEEING--? RUPERT, YOU'RE A *CHILD!*
I ASSURE YOU, MY MIND AND MEMORIES ARE THOSE OF THE MAN YOU KNEW. THE *MATURE* MAN.
YOUR BODY IS TWELVE!
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO FOLLOW CONVENTION. I HOPED--
WHAT? THAT I'M A PEDOPHILE?
SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO ABANDON ME? *DESTROY MY LIFE?* GOOD JOB I DIDN'T HAVE THE AUDACITY TO BECOME *CRIPPLED* OR *TERMINALLY ILL!*
DID YOU EVER REALLY CARE ABOUT ME AT ALL?

YOU'RE BEING OVERLY DRAMATIC AND EXTREMELY UNFAIR.
WE'VE ALWAYS LED OUR OWN LIVES. IT'S WHY WE'VE WORKED ALL THESE YEARS. I'M NOT YOUR WIFE, AND NEITHER OF US EVER WANTED ME TO BE.
I LOVE YOU, RUPERT. THAT'LL NEVER CHANGE. BUT I CAN'T...*LOVE* YOU. NOT THE SAME WAY. I'D FEEL LIKE A CRIMINAL.
NO LESS A CRIMINAL THAN I'D FEEL, CHATTING UP SEVENTH-GRADE GIRLS!
DO YOU KNOW HOW SLOWLY TIME PASSES AT THIS AGE? IT'LL BE YEARS BEFORE AN ADULT WOMAN WILL EVEN LOOK AT ME. THAT'S AN *ETERNITY!*
NO ONE RAISED AN EYEBROW AT BUFFY DATING MEN *CENTURIES* OLDER THAN HER WHEN SHE WAS SIXTEEN. BECAUSE THEY *LOOKED* APPROPRIATE. IT'S SO *BLOODY SHALLOW!*
JUDGING BY THE DECIDEDLY *UN-RUPERT-LIKE* WAY YOU'RE BEHAVING, I THINK THERE'S MORE TO WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU THAN A CHANGE IN APPEARANCE.
I KNOW IT'LL BE A CHALLENGE. AND I WILL BE HERE FOR YOU... AS YOUR FRIEND. I KNOW THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU WANTED. IT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED, EITHER.
BUT I HOPE, AFTER WHAT WE'VE HAD...ALL WE MEAN TO EACH OTHER... THAT IT'S WORTH SOMETHING.
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT. THIS ISN'T HOW I USED TO BE AT ALL, IS IT?
I'M NOT SIMPLY MY OLD SELF IN A SMALLER FRAME. I'M SOMETHING...SOMEONE... ALTOGETHER NEW.
THAT MEANS YOU CAN BE ANYONE YOU LIKE.
I LIKED WHO I WAS.


ANDREW.
EVERYONE'S BEING VERY...FREE. ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY FOR ME TO BE HERE?
WELL, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE FOR COVEN MEMBERS ONLY, BUT YOUR DEMONOLOGY CLASS TAUGHT US SO MUCH, YOU GET A FREE PASS. AND I AM STILL HOPING YOU'LL JOIN.
I ALSO MIGHT BE PLAYING A LITTLE MATCHMAKER. THERE'S SOMEONE HERE I GOT THE IMPRESSION YOU WERE KINDA INTO.
HE'S OUR LEADER. HIS NAME'S CLIVE.
I...HE'S VERY... MALE.
OH! SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE SO NARROW MINDED AND PREFERENCE CONSTRICTING. YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S A BACCHANAL. CASTING OFF LABELS IS THE WHOLE POINT.
IF WE'RE PLAYING IT LIKE THAT, I'M UP FOR A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE IF YOU ARE.
UM, THESE SHOES AREN'T REALLY MADE FOR THAT KIND OF WALKING.
I REALLY MOSTLY CAME FOR THE POTION YOU MENTIONED HAVING...THE ONE THAT CAN CREATE A NEW BODY.
WHICH I AM INTERESTED IN FOR PURELY ACADEMIC REASONS. TOTALLY NOT BECAUSE I'M TAMPERING WITH FORCES MAN WAS NEVER MEANT TO.

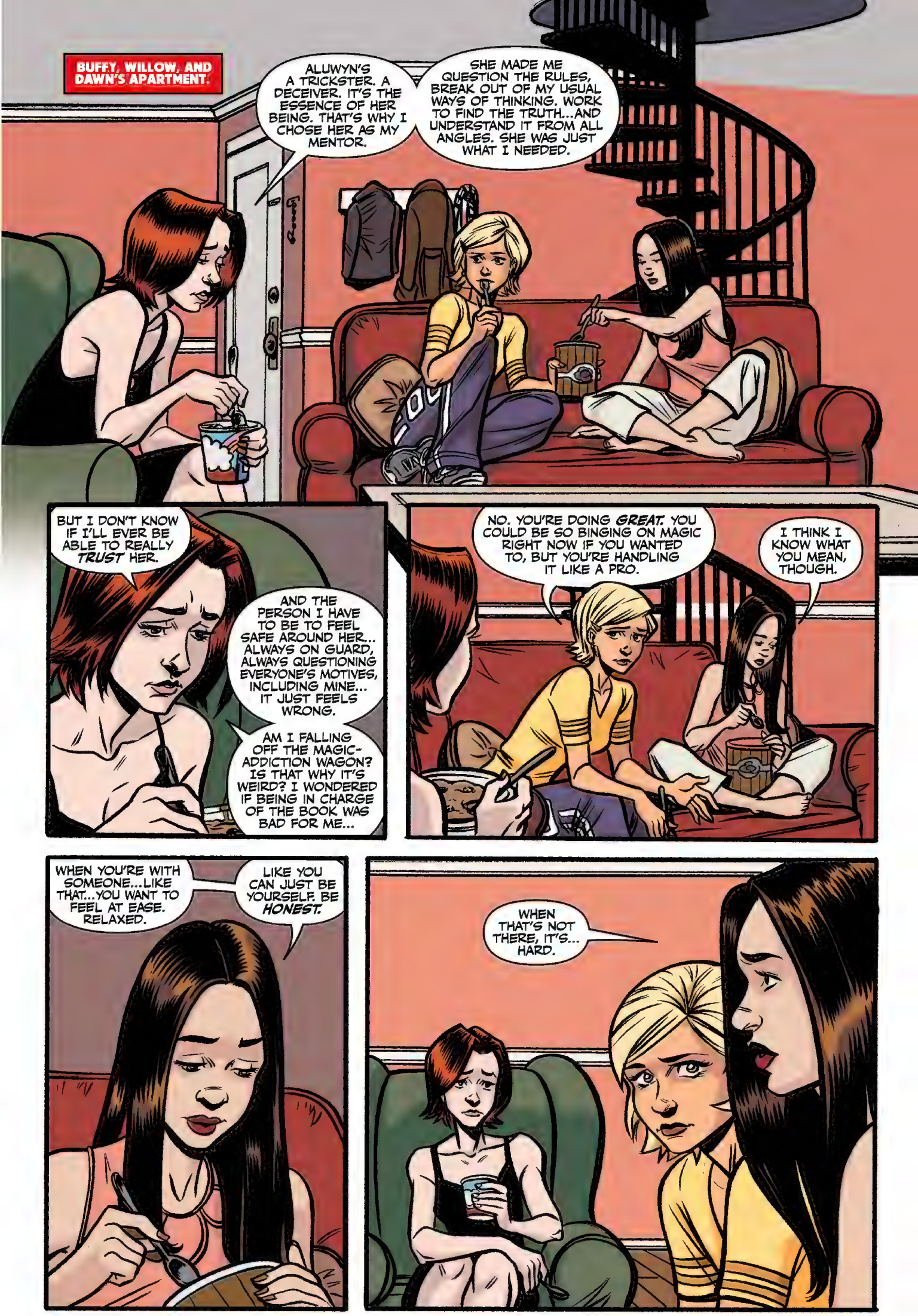

RIGHT...THE ASCLEPIAN VIAL. YOU'RE WELCOME TO CHECK IT OUT. BUT I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTOOD ME.
IT DOESN'T MAKE, LIKE, NEW BODIES OUT OF NOTHING. IT'S SUPPOSED TO TRANSFORM YOU INTO YOUR PERFECT SELF.
INTERESTING. MORE OF A GOLDEN AGE ORIGIN TROPE... MAGIC WORDS, BELTS, RINGS. SUPPLANTED BY RADIATION IN THE SILVER AGE.
YEAH, WELL, IT'S NEVER WORKED FOR ANY OF US. BUT IT'S KIND OF A TRADITION THAT EVERYONE WHO COMES HERE TAKES A SIP. IT NEVER GETS EMPTY, SO IT'S DEFINITELY MAGIC...
...OR CLIVE REFILLS IT WITH PERRIER. TASTES KINDA FIZZY. GO ON, GIVE IT A WHIRL. IT'S NEVER HURT ANYONE.
I'M STILL MORE "BEFORE" CHRIS EVANS.
TO BE HONEST, I THINK THE LEGEND'S A METAPHOR. DRINKING THE POTION IS SYMBOLIC. A RITUAL MEANT TO ENCOURAGE SELF-EXAMINATION AND ANALYSIS. AND IN THAT SPIRIT...
I'VE SEEN HOW YOU LOOK AT CLIVE. YOU NEVER LOOKED AT ME LIKE THAT. IS THERE ANY GIRL YOU LIKE AT ALL? HAS THERE EVER BEEN?
I DON'T REALLY GIVE ROMANCE MUCH THOUGHT. WAY TOO BUSY. NO TIME FOR LOVE, DR. JONES.
OH, COME ON. NOBODY'S TOO BUSY TO THINK ABOUT LOVE.
WHEN YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND PICTURE YOURSELF KISSING SOMEONE, WHO IS IT? WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?
I...I DON'T...
CLIVE. I PICTURE MYSELF KISSING SOMEONE LIKE CLIVE.
I THINK...
JULIE, I THINK I'M GAY.

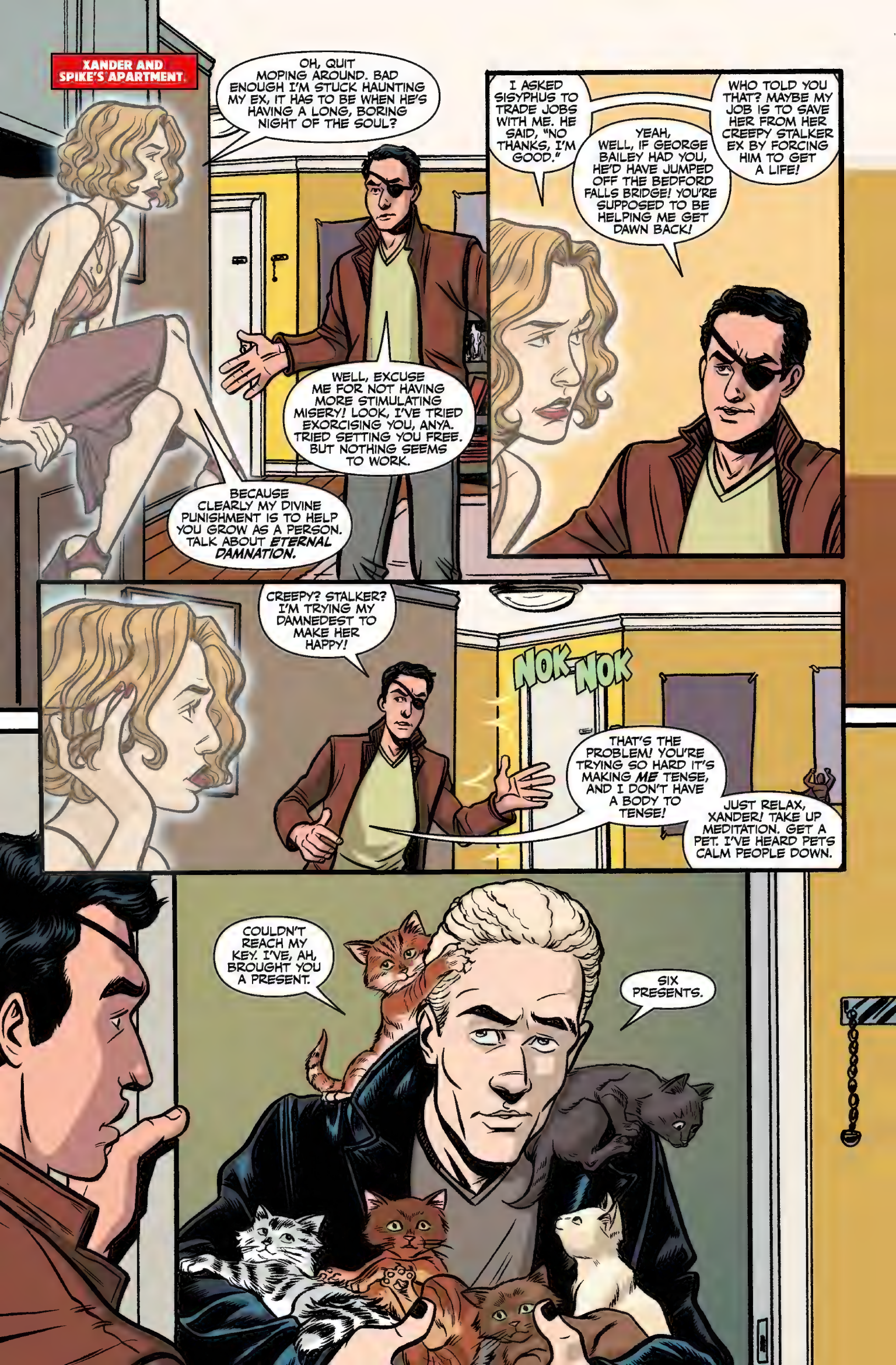
KRASSH
CONGRATULATIONS. YOU JUST DID SOMETHING AWESOME.
YEAH--WHAT'S ADVERTISED. HELPING YOU BE YOUR IDEAL SELF. WHO YOU *REALLY* ARE--
NO, I-- THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT. I WOULD'VE KNOWN BEFORE NOW. I THINK THE POTION'S DOING SOMETHING TO ME.
THE ASCLEPIAN VIAL.
GIVE IT TO ME AND I WILL ONLY KILL HALF OF YOU.
ANDREW! DISGUSTING FLESH MONSTER WANTS THE VIAL! *GIVE IT TO HIM!*
OH, I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM, ALL RIGHT.
UPSIDE THE *HEAD*.
ANDREW?

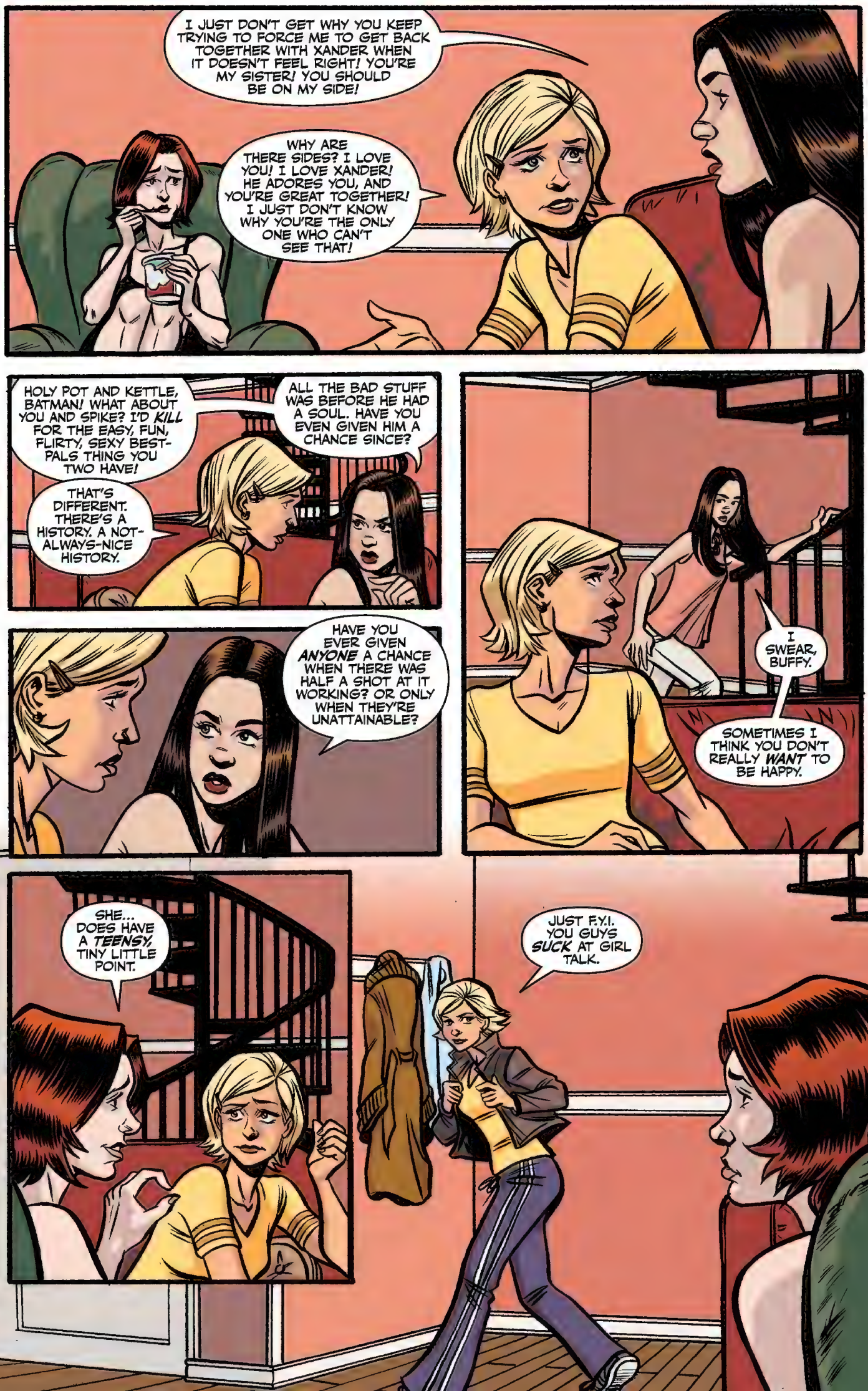

I'LL GIVE HIM ALL HE CAN HANDLE, AND MORE!
DAMNATION. I'M TOO LATE.
I KNOW YOUR GAME, VILLAIN. YOU MADE THESE THINGS OUT OF MEAT AND OTHER HANDY SUPPLIES. THEY'RE NOT ALIVE, SO I CAN TEAR THEM TO BITS WITHOUT BEING EVIL.
AND YOU BEING A DEMON...I CAN DO THE SAME TO YOU.
HUMANS. GIVE THEM A LITTLE POWER AND THEY CAN'T SHUT UP.
I WASN'T PREPARED FOR THIS. ANOTHER TIME, FOOL.
OOH! I LOVE THAT. "ANOTHER TIME, FOOL." TOTALLY DR. DOOM. I GOTTA STEP UP MY GAME.
RUN ANYWHERE YOU WANT, MONSTER. YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM JUSTICE!
DUDE! YOU SAVED US ALL!
THE POTION WORKED...FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER! LOOK AT YOU, MAN. YOU TURNED INTO YOUR PERFECT SELF..
...YOU'RE A SUPERHERO!

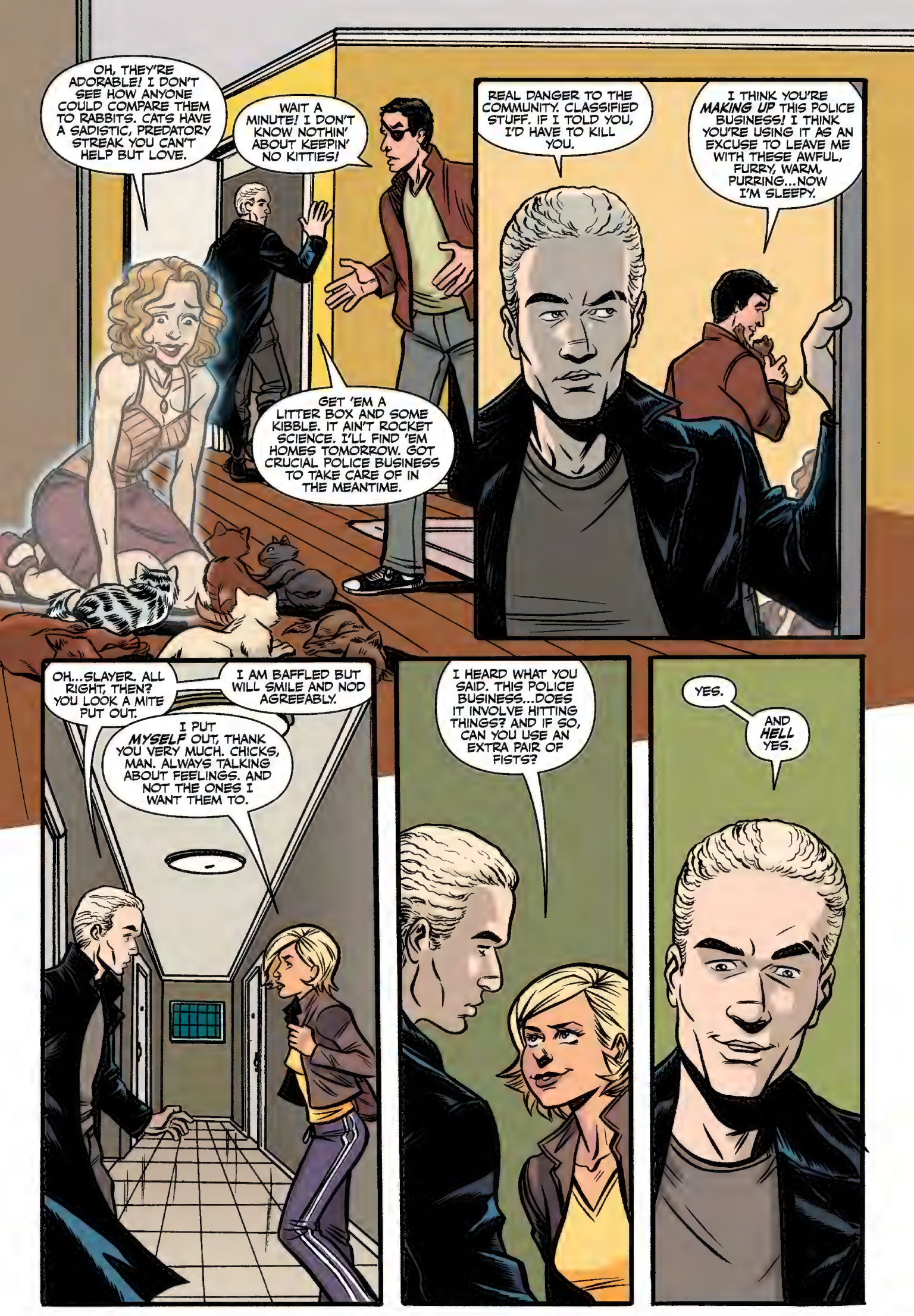
SPIKE.
HALF TON OF BEEF GONE. PLUS THE GUARD'S ARM AND LEGS. I WAS THINKING WEREWOLF... MAYBE A PACK OF 'EM?
DON'T FEEL RIGHT. WEREWOLVES ARE CREATURES OF IMPULSE... THEY'D HAVE TORN THE POOR FELLA TO SHREDS. SOMEONE SPECIFICALLY WANTED AN ARM AND TWO LEGS.
COULD BE A RITUAL, BUT ADD IN THE MEAT, AND MY GUT SAYS SOMEONE'S MAKING FLESH GOLEMS.
DO NOT CROSS
I'LL ASK AROUND, SEE IF ANYONE'S HEARD ANYTHING. OR SMELLED ANYTHING. FLESH GOLEMS GET RIPE PRETTY QUICK.
APPRECIATED. LISTEN...OFFICER HARDWICKE, WITH THE PONYTAIL? SHE'S KINDA GOT A THING FOR YOU. BIG FAN OF THE ANNE RICE BOOKS. YOU DIDN'T HEAR IT FROM ME.
THANKS, BUT I MAKE IT A POINT TO STAY AWAY FROM LITERATURE LOVERS. THE REALITY NEVER MATCHES THE FANTASY.
"BUT YOU'RE NOT SPARKLING!" WELL, *EXCUSE* ME. I'LL SHOVE SOME POP ROCKS UP ME ARSE. NAH...RECKON I'LL BE MARRIED TO THE JOB FOR A BIT. KEEP THINGS SIMPLE, LIKE YOU.
HEY, I'VE GOT A DINNER DATE THURSDAY. CONVENTION OF SUPERNATURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS. ME AND A LADY FROM THE L.A.P.D. REALLY HIT IT OFF LAST TIME.
LOOK AT DOWLING, ALL GROWN UP! GO ON, MY SON!
WANT ME TO ROUGH YOU UP A BIT, A FEW BATTLE SCARS TO IMPRESS HER? I'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTIN' WITH MAKIN' MY NAILS INTO CLAWS LATELY...WAS ALWAYS MORE DRU'S THING, BUT--
I'M ALL SET, THANKS. LISTEN, SPIKE... I'M GLAD TO HAVE YOU WORKING WITH US SO OFTEN, BELIEVE ME. AND YOU KNOW I ADORE BUFFY...
...BUT YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE OTHER WOMEN A CHANCE, ON THEIR OWN TERMS. GET BACK OUT THERE. DON'T COMPARE EVERYONE YOU MEET TO--
BLOODY HELL, A BLOKE GETS HIMSELF A BIRD AND HE WANTS TO CLAP ALL HIS MATES IN CHAINS, TOO. I'M PLAYIN' THE FIELD, OKAY? OFF TO A TRENDY SPOT RIGHT NOW, IN FACT...

THE SUPPURATING SORE SOCIAL CLUB.
FLESH GOLEMS? SOUNDS LIKE THE SCULPTOR. DEMON LORD, WORKS IN MEAT, KINDA OBSESSED WITH BUILDING THE PERFECT BODY. AND NOT IN THE JACK LALANNE SENSE.
BEER
THINK I MIGHTA HEARD OF HIM ROUND WORLD WAR I. WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?
SOMEWHERE HE CAN GET ACCESS TO BODY PARTS. NEAR MORGUES, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, CEMETERIES...BUT HE DOESN'T LIKE 'EM EMBALMED.
TA. DON'T SPEND IT ALL IN ONE PLACE.
TOO LATE. I'M GONNA TURN IT INTO KITTEN FLESH, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.
HANG ON. THOUGHT GAMBLING FOR KITTENS WAS A THING O' THE PAST. BAD FOR THE PUBLIC IMAGE, LIKE.
MEW?
RIGHT.
CRACK
YOU SEE ANY HUMANS AROUND? ME NEITHER. YOUR SOUL'S SHOWING, BLONDIE. YOU DON'T WANNA SEE WHAT COMES NEXT, GET OUTTA HERE.


BUFFY, WILLOW, AND DAWN'S APARTMENT.
ALUWYN'S A TRICKSTER. A DECEIVER. IT'S THE ESSENCE OF HER BEING. THAT'S WHY I CHOSE HER AS MY MENTOR.
SHE MADE ME QUESTION THE RULES, BREAK OUT OF MY USUAL WAYS OF THINKING. WORK TO FIND THE TRUTH...AND UNDERSTAND IT FROM ALL ANGLES. SHE WAS JUST WHAT I NEEDED.
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO REALLY *TRUST* HER.
AND THE PERSON I HAVE TO BE TO FEEL SAFE AROUND HER... ALWAYS ON GUARD, ALWAYS QUESTIONING EVERYONE'S MOTIVES, INCLUDING MINE... IT JUST FEELS WRONG.
AM I FALLING OFF THE MAGIC-ADDICTION WAGON? IS THAT WHY IT'S WEIRD? I WONDERED IF BEING IN CHARGE OF THE BOOK WAS BAD FOR ME...
NO. YOU'RE DOING *GREAT.* YOU COULD BE SO BINGING ON MAGIC RIGHT NOW IF YOU WANTED TO, BUT YOU'RE HANDLING IT LIKE A PRO.
I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, THOUGH.
WHEN YOU'RE WITH SOMEONE...LIKE THAT...YOU WANT TO FEEL AT EASE. RELAXED.
LIKE YOU CAN JUST BE YOURSELF. BE *HONEST.*
WHEN THAT'S NOT THERE, IT'S... HARD.

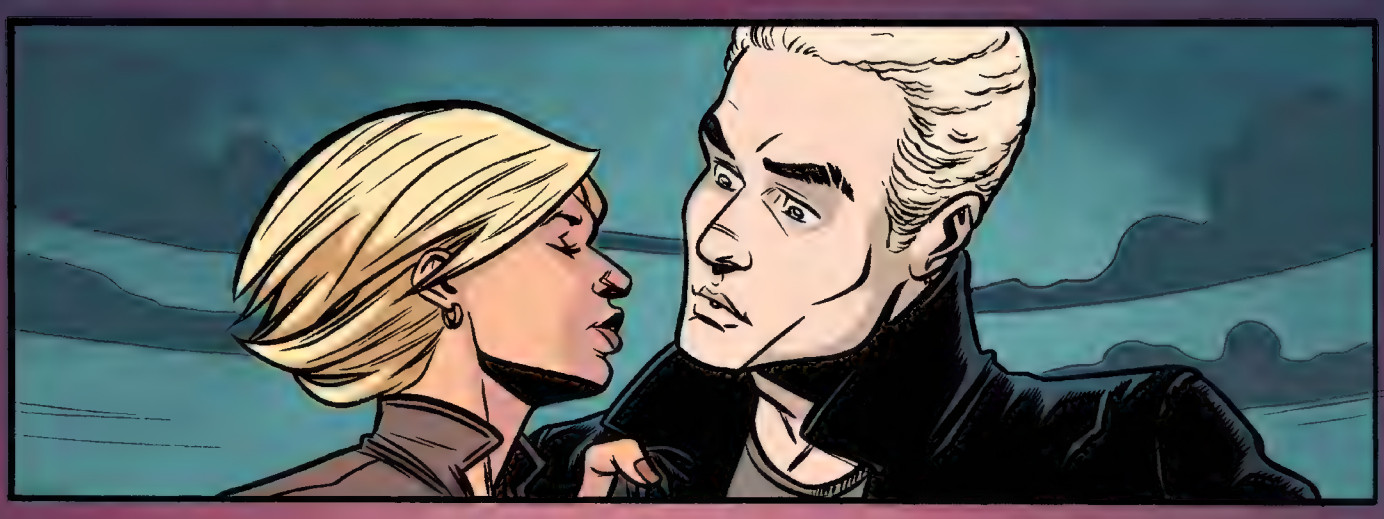

XANDER AND SPIKE'S APARTMENT
OH, QUIT MOPING AROUND. BAD ENOUGH I'M STUCK HAUNTING MY EX, IT HAS TO BE WHEN HE'S HAVING A LONG, BORING NIGHT OF THE SOUL?
WELL, EXCUSE ME FOR NOT HAVING MORE STIMULATING MISERY! LOOK, I'VE TRIED EXORCISING YOU, ANYA. TRIED SETTING YOU FREE. BUT NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK.
BECAUSE CLEARLY MY DIVINE PUNISHMENT IS TO HELP YOU GROW AS A PERSON. TALK ABOUT *ETERNAL DAMNATION.*
I ASKED SISYPHUS TO TRADE JOBS WITH ME. HE SAID, "NO THANKS, I'M GOOD."
YEAH, WELL, IF GEORGE BAILEY HAD YOU, HE'D HAVE JUMPED OFF THE BEDFORD FALLS BRIDGE! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE HELPING ME GET DAWN BACK!
WHO TOLD YOU THAT? MAYBE MY JOB IS TO SAVE HER FROM HER CREEPY STALKER EX BY FORCING HIM TO GET A LIFE!
CREEPY? STALKER? I'M TRYING MY DAMNEDEST TO MAKE HER HAPPY!
NOK-NOK
THAT'S THE PROBLEM! YOU'RE TRYING SO HARD IT'S MAKING *ME* TENSE, AND I DON'T HAVE A BODY TO TENSE!
JUST RELAX, XANDER! TAKE UP MEDITATION. GET A PET. I'VE HEARD PETS CALM PEOPLE DOWN.
COULDN'T REACH MY KEY. I'VE, AH, BROUGHT YOU A PRESENT.
SIX PRESENTS.

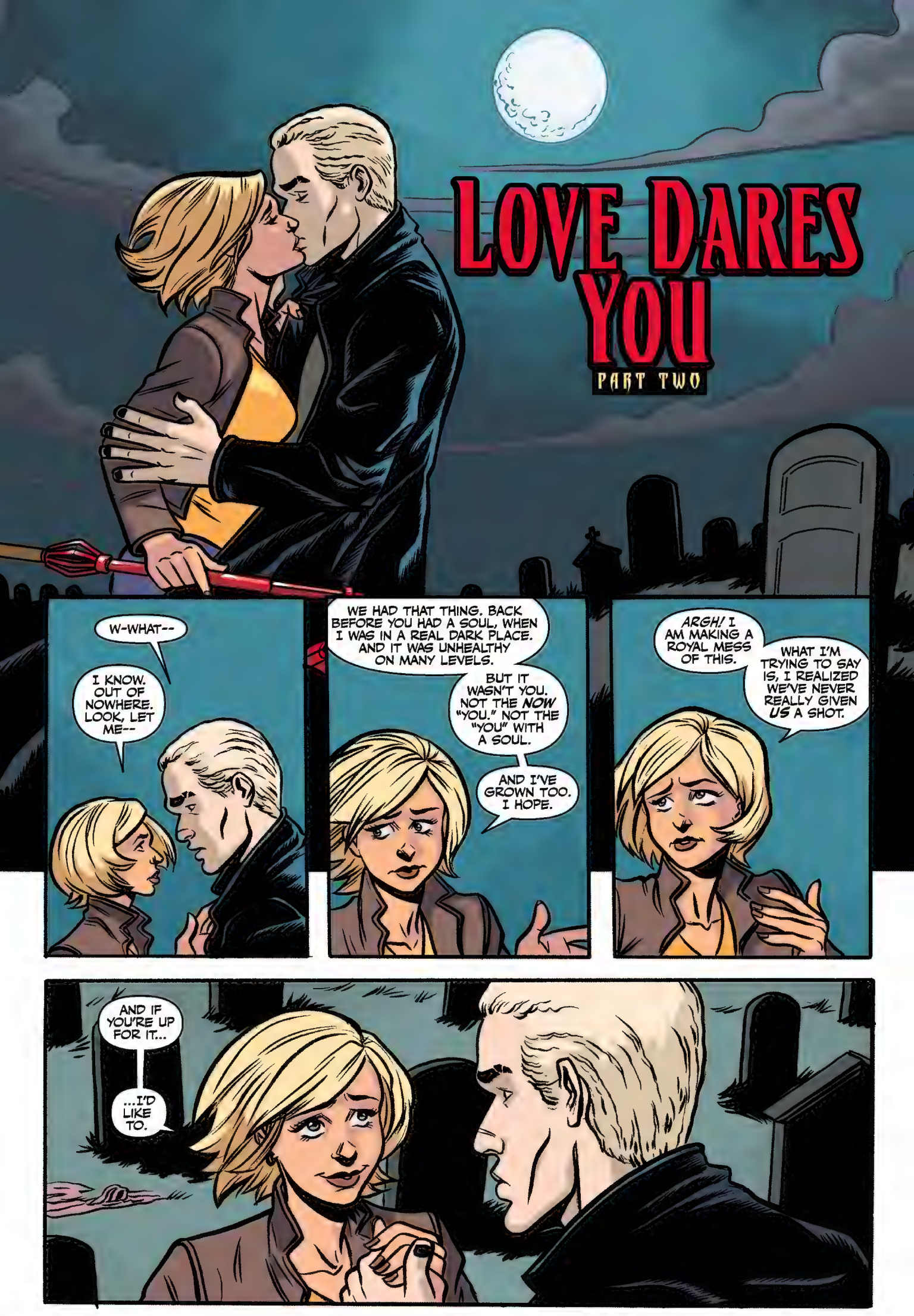

I JUST DON'T GET WHY YOU KEEP TRYING TO FORCE ME TO GET BACK TOGETHER WITH XANDER WHEN IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT! YOU'RE MY SISTER! YOU SHOULD BE ON MY SIDE!
WHY ARE THERE SIDES? I LOVE YOU! I LOVE XANDER! HE ADORES YOU, AND YOU'RE GREAT TOGETHER! I JUST DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN'T SEE THAT!
HOLY POT AND KETTLE, BATMAN! WHAT ABOUT YOU AND SPIKE? I'D *KILL* FOR THE EASY, FUN, FLIRTY, SEXY BEST-PALS THING YOU TWO HAVE!
ALL THE BAD STUFF WAS BEFORE HE HAD A SOUL. HAVE YOU EVEN GIVEN HIM A CHANCE SINCE?
THAT'S DIFFERENT. THERE'S A HISTORY. A NOT-ALWAYS-NICE HISTORY.
HAVE YOU EVER GIVEN *ANYONE* A CHANCE WHEN THERE WAS HALF A SHOT AT IT WORKING? OR ONLY WHEN THEY'RE UNATTAINABLE?
I SWEAR, BUFFY.
SOMETIMES I THINK YOU DON'T REALLY *WANT* TO BE HAPPY.
SHE... DOES HAVE A *TEENSY,* TINY LITTLE POINT.
JUST F.Y.I. YOU GUYS *SUCK* AT GIRL TALK.

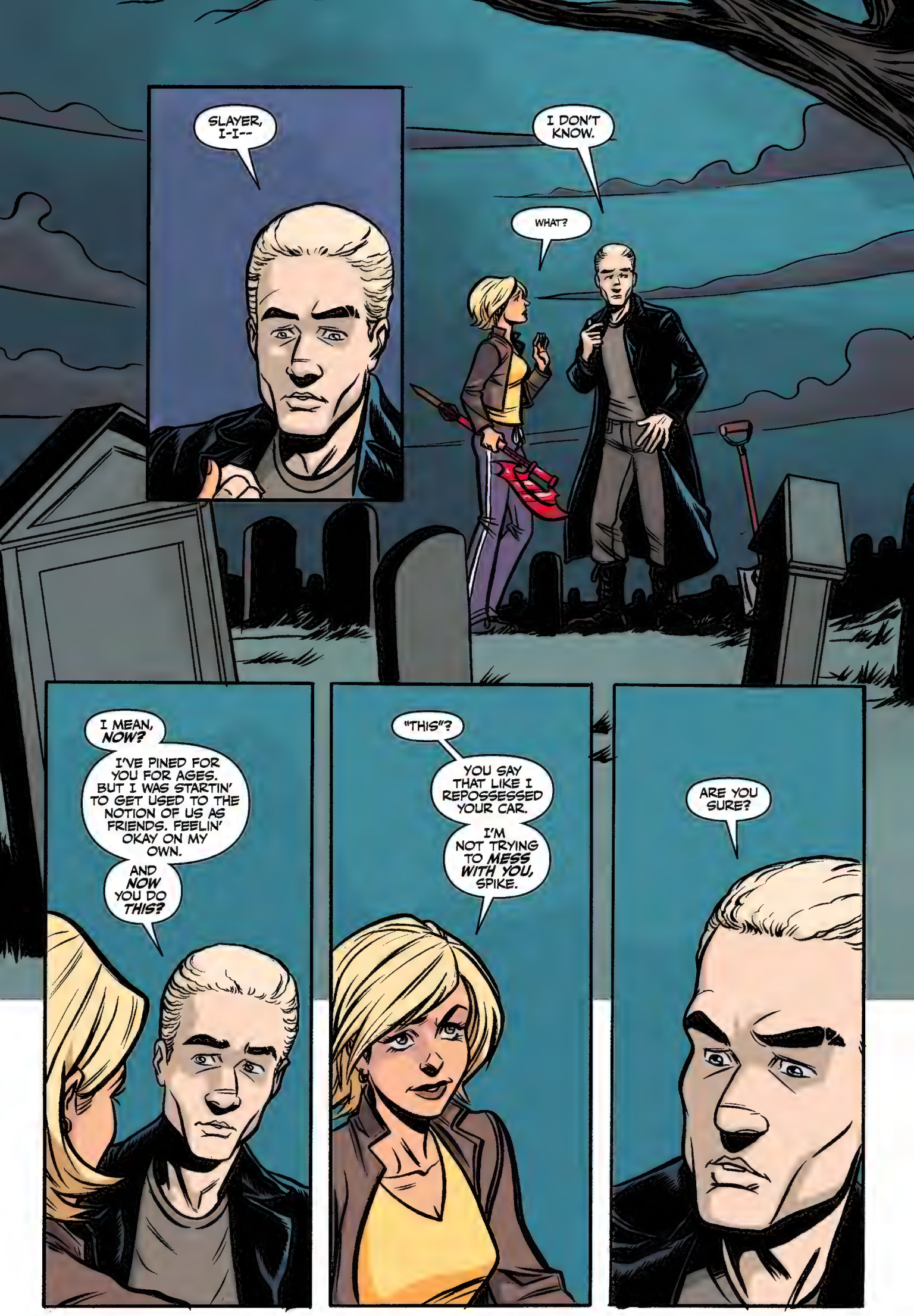

OH, THEY'RE ADORABLE! I DON'T SEE HOW ANYONE COULD COMPARE THEM TO RABBITS. CATS HAVE A SADISTIC, PREDATORY STREAK YOU CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE.
WAIT A MINUTE! I DON'T KNOW NOTHIN' ABOUT KEEPIN' NO KITTIES!
GET 'EM A LITTER BOX AND SOME KIBBLE. IT AIN'T ROCKET SCIENCE. I'LL FIND 'EM HOMES TOMORROW. GOT CRUCIAL POLICE BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF IN THE MEANTIME.
REAL DANGER TO THE COMMUNITY. CLASSIFIED STUFF. IF I TOLD YOU, I'D HAVE TO KILL YOU.
I THINK YOU'RE *MAKING UP* THIS POLICE BUSINESS! I THINK YOU'RE USING IT AS AN EXCUSE TO LEAVE ME WITH THESE AWFUL, FURRY, WARM, PURRING...NOW I'M SLEEPY.
OH...SLAYER. ALL RIGHT, THEN? YOU LOOK A MITE PUT OUT.
I AM BAFFLED BUT WILL SMILE AND NOD AGREEABLY.
I PUT *MYSELF* OUT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. CHICKS, MAN. ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS. AND NOT THE ONES I WANT THEM TO.
I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID. THIS POLICE BUSINESS...DOES IT INVOLVE HITTING THINGS? AND IF SO, CAN YOU USE AN EXTRA PAIR OF FISTS?
YES.
AND *HELL* YES.

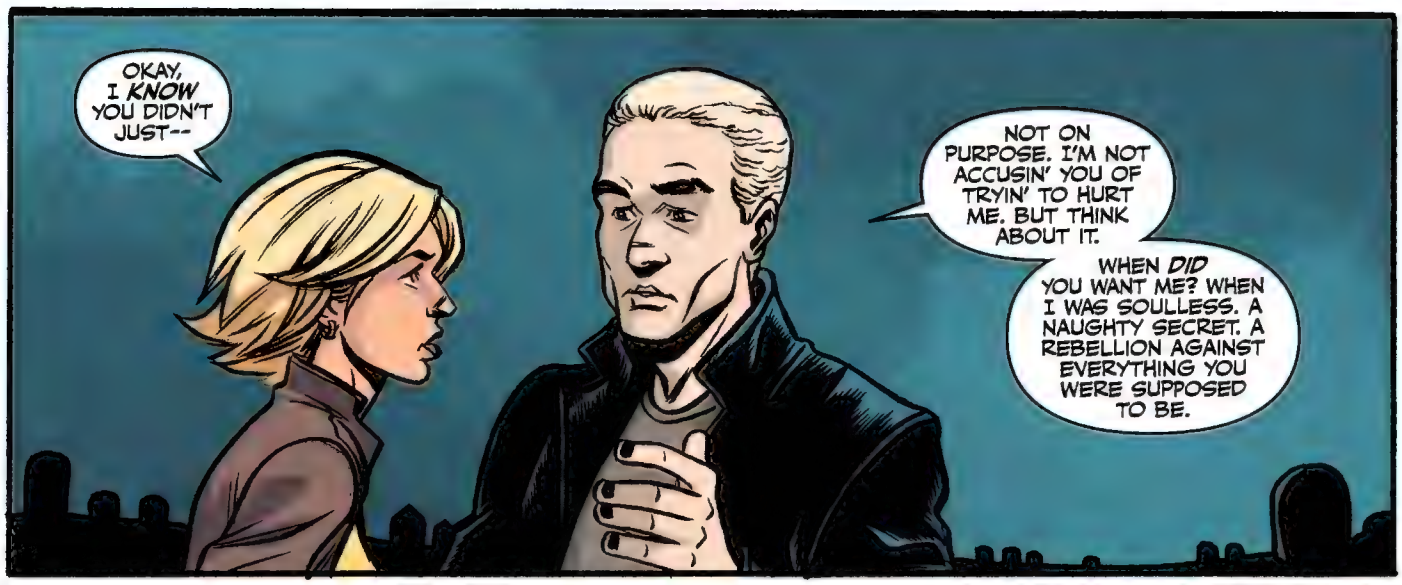
BAY AREA CHEMICAL-FREE GREEN GRAVEYARD.
DON'T SEE THE BOSS MAN ANYWHERE. THIS FEELS LIKE A SKELETON CREW, JUST HERE TO WATCH THE PLACE.
GET IT? "SKELETON" CREW?
PUN FAIL. YOU SHOULD'VE SAVED IT FOR WHEN WE WERE FIGHTING REANIMATED SKELETONS. THESE THINGS HAVE TOO MUCH MEAT ON THEIR BONES.
GET IT? "MEAT ON THEIR BONES"?
NO. MY JOKE WAS LAME, BUT IT MADE SENSE. YOURS WAS SIMPLY LITERAL, TO THE POINT OF BEING NONSENSICAL.
YOURS DID *NOT* MAKE SENSE, FOR THE REASONS I CLEARLY STATED. MINE WAS A PLAY ON A EUPHEMISM FOR FAT PEOPLE AND...YEAH, IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE.
FEELING BETTER?
MUCH. THANKS. THIS WAS EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED.
I HAD A FEELING.
YOU USUALLY DO.

SPIKE...
HM?

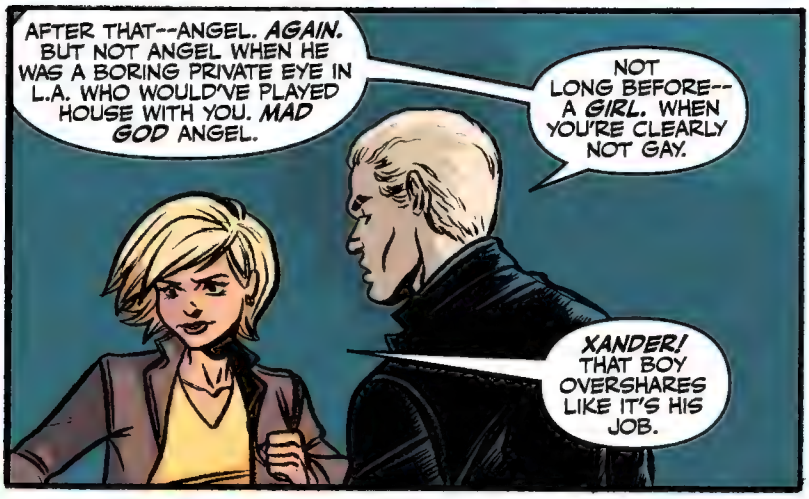


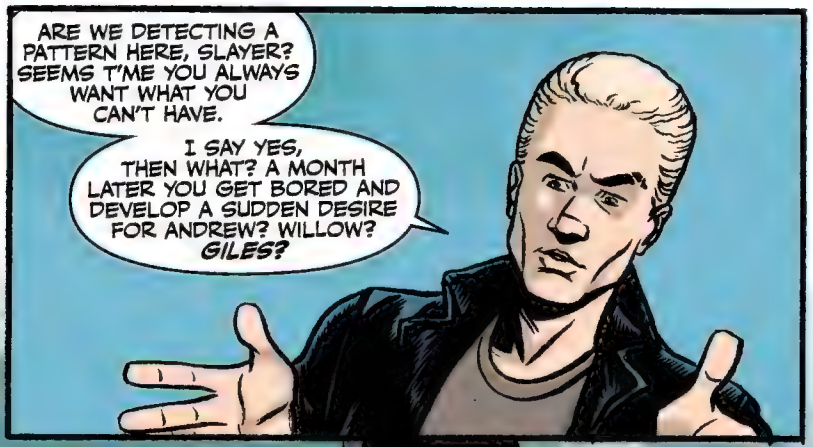

LOVE DARES YOU
PART TWO
W-WHAT--
I KNOW. OUT OF NOWHERE. LOOK, LET ME--
WE HAD THAT THING. BACK BEFORE YOU HAD A SOUL, WHEN I WAS IN A REAL DARK PLACE. AND IT WAS UNHEALTHY ON MANY LEVELS.
BUT IT WASN'T YOU. NOT THE NOW "YOU." NOT THE "YOU" WITH A SOUL.
AND I'VE GROWN TOO. I HOPE.
ARGH! I AM MAKING A ROYAL MESS OF THIS.
WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS, I REALIZED WE'VE NEVER REALLY GIVEN US A SHOT.
AND IF YOU'RE UP FOR IT...
...I'D LIKE TO.

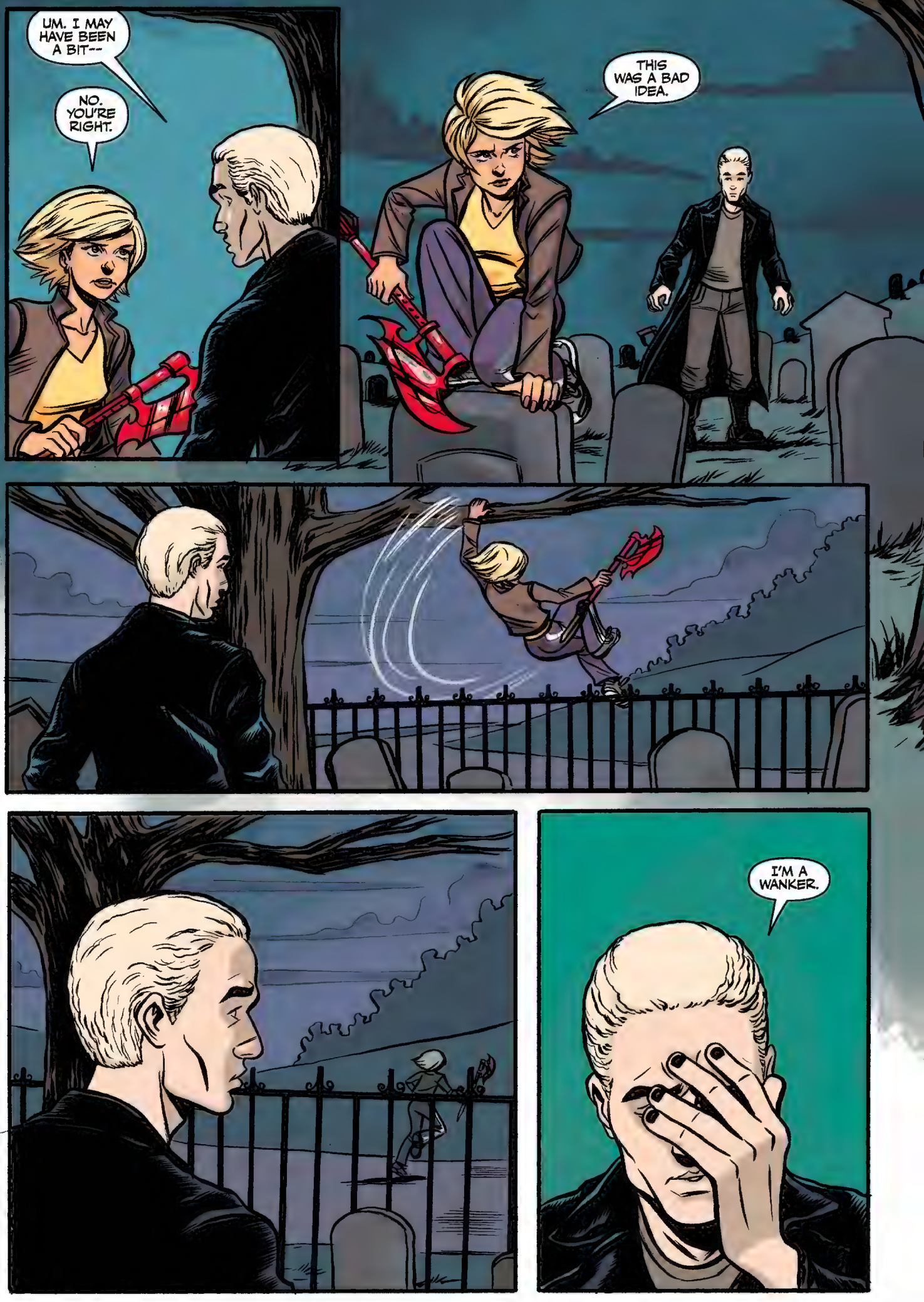

SLAYER, I-I--
I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT?
I MEAN, NOW?
I'VE PINED FOR YOU FOR AGES. BUT I WAS STARTIN' TO GET USED TO THE NOTION OF US AS FRIENDS. FEELIN' OKAY ON MY OWN.
AND NOW YOU DO THIS?
"THIS"?
YOU SAY THAT LIKE I REPOSSESSED YOUR CAR.
I'M NOT TRYING TO MESS WITH YOU, SPIKE.
ARE YOU SURE?


OKAY, I KNOW YOU DIDN'T JUST--
NOT ON PURPOSE. I'M NOT ACCUSIN' YOU OF TRYIN' TO HURT ME. BUT THINK ABOUT IT.
WHEN DID YOU WANT ME? WHEN I WAS SOULLESS. A NAUGHTY SECRET. A REBELLION AGAINST EVERYTHING YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE.

TALKIN' OF BLOKES WHO PINED AFTER YOU, XANDER WAS YOUR MIX-TAPE PUPPY FOR YEARS. AND YOU COULDN'T HAVE BEEN LESS INTERESTED...UNTIL HE TOOK UP WITH YOUR SISTER.
I NEVER SHOULD'VE LET YOU TWO MOVE IN TOGETHER.

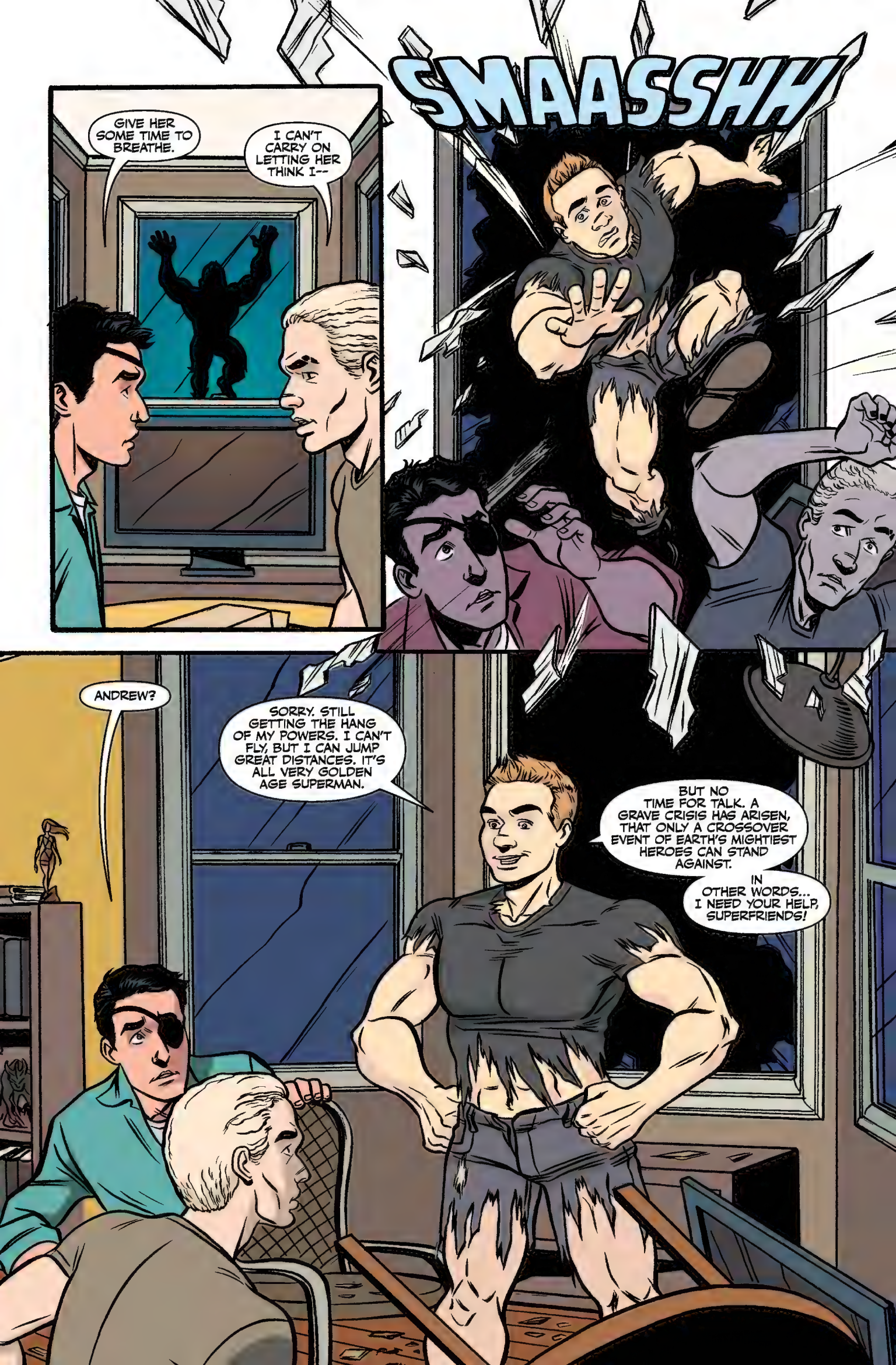

AFTER THAT--ANGEL. AGAIN. BUT NOT ANGEL WHEN HE WAS A BORING PRIVATE EYE IN L.A. WHO WOULD'VE PLAYED HOUSE WITH YOU. MAD GOD ANGEL.
NOT LONG BEFORE-- A GIRL. WHEN YOU'RE CLEARLY NOT GAY.
XANDER! THAT BOY OVERSHARES LIKE IT'S HIS JOB.

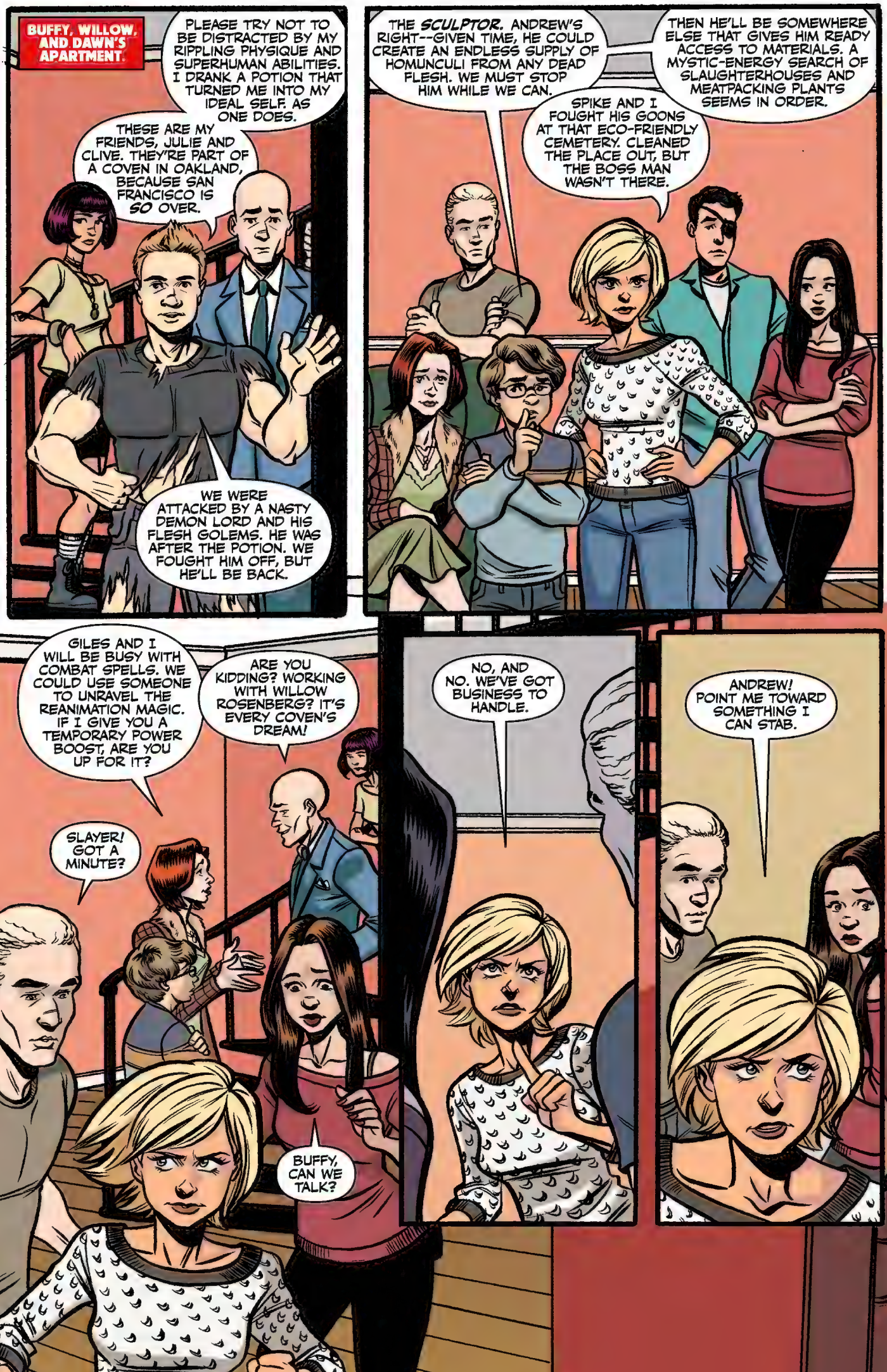

ARE WE DETECTING A PATTERN HERE, SLAYER? SEEMS T'ME YOU ALWAYS WANT WHAT YOU CAN'T HAVE.
I SAY YES, THEN WHAT? A MONTH LATER YOU GET BORED AND DEVELOP A SUDDEN DESIRE FOR ANDREW? WILLOW? GILES?


UM. I MAY HAVE BEEN A BIT--
NO. YOU'RE RIGHT.
THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.
I'M A WANKER.

YEAH...
...YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH A MORON.
YOU TOLD ME YOU GAVE HER THE SAME BLOODY SPEECH IN TIBET!
I WAS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE SINGLE AND AVAILABLE. AND IN LOVE WITH HER.
FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, IT SEEMS SHE RATHER COURAGEOUSLY BROKE OUT OF HER PATTERN OF DYSFUNCTION TO REACH OUT TO YOU.
AND AT HER MOMENT OF GREATEST VULNERABILITY, YOU SLAPPED HER DOWN. CONFIRMING HER WORST DEEP-SEATED FEARS ABOUT MALE ABANDONMENT.
I AM SUCH A WANKER.

NO, YOU'RE DAMAGED. NOT UNLIKE HER. DR. MIKE AND I HAVE BEEN COVERING THIS IN THERAPY.
DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THAT WHAT YOU SAID TO HER APPLIES TO YOU, TOO? EXCEPT YOU GRAVITATE TOWARDS WOMEN WHO ARE INCAPABLE OF HAVING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP.
CRAZY DRUSILLA. SELF-HATING BUFFY. HARMONY.
DON'T GIVE ME ANY OF YOUR HEAD-SHRINKING JIBBER-JABBER, HARRIS.
LOOK, I GET IT. LOVE MEANS RISK. PUTTING YOUR HEART IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HANDS CAN GET YOU HURT. BAD.
BUT THAT'S WHAT LOVE IS.
WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW IS ROUGH. BUT I DON'T REGRET ONE SECOND OF WHAT I HAD WITH DAWN.
EVEN IF THAT'S ALL IT'LL EVER BE... IT WAS WORTH EVERY OUNCE OF PAIN.
I'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HER.
WHOA THERE, COWBOY. YOU JUST POKED THE BEAR. WHATEVER YOU SAY NOW WILL BE VIEWED AS FURTHER POKING, AND LIKELY MET WITH VIOLENCE.

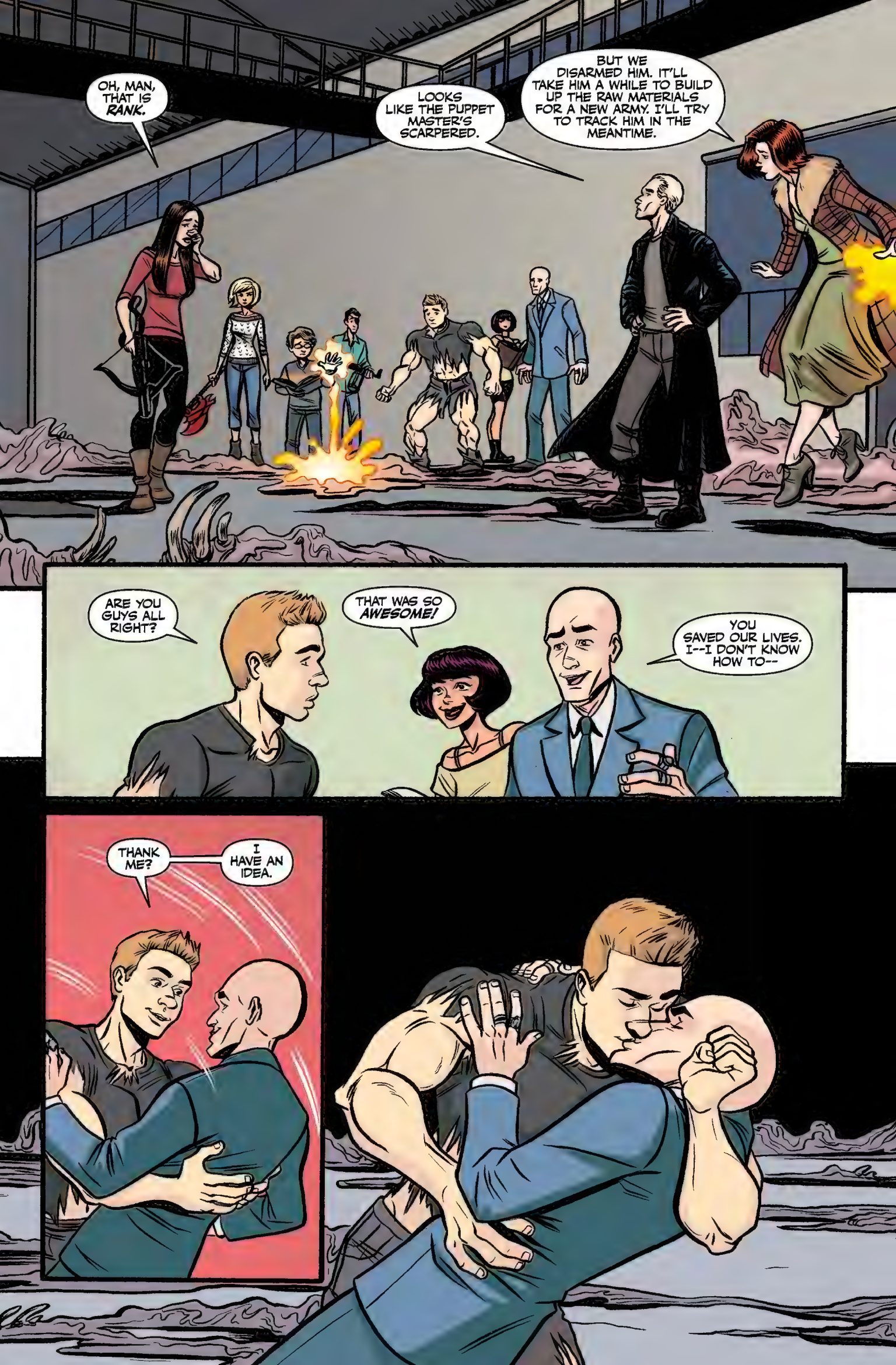

GIVE HER SOME TIME TO BREATHE.
I CAN'T CARRY ON LETTING HER THINK I--
SMAASSHH
ANDREW?
SORRY. STILL GETTING THE HANG OF MY POWERS. I CAN'T FLY, BUT I CAN JUMP GREAT DISTANCES. IT'S ALL VERY GOLDEN AGE SUPERMAN.
BUT NO TIME FOR TALK. A GRAVE CRISIS HAS ARISEN, THAT ONLY A CROSSOVER EVENT OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES CAN STAND AGAINST.
IN OTHER WORDS... I NEED YOUR HELP, SUPERFRIENDS!

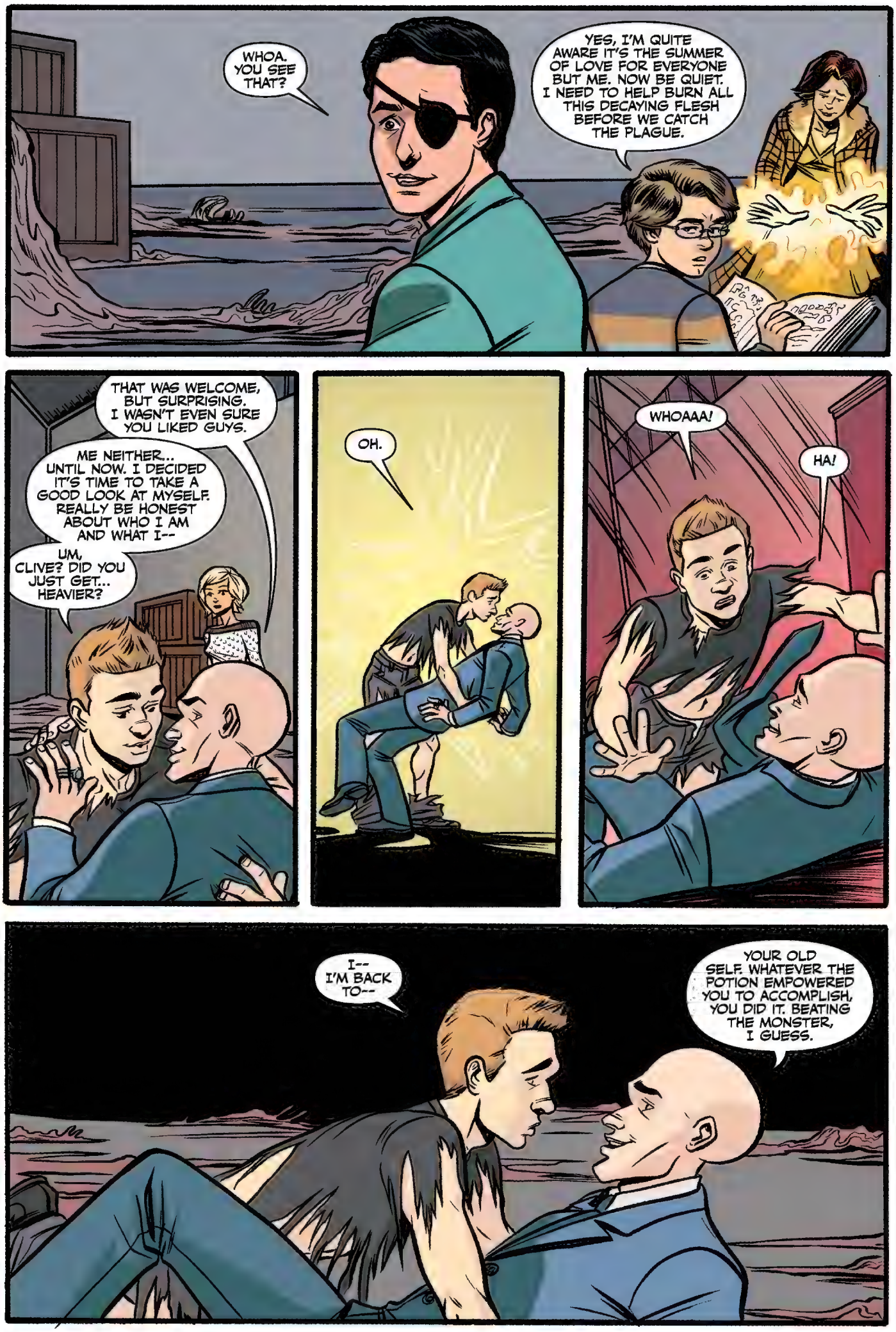

BUFFY, WILLOW, AND DAWN'S APARTMENT.
PLEASE TRY NOT TO BE DISTRACTED BY MY RIPPLING PHYSIQUE AND SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES. I DRANK A POTION THAT TURNED ME INTO MY IDEAL SELF. AS ONE DOES.
THESE ARE MY FRIENDS, JULIE AND CLIVE. THEY'RE PART OF A COVEN IN OAKLAND, BECAUSE SAN FRANCISCO IS SO OVER.
WE WERE ATTACKED BY A NASTY DEMON LORD AND HIS FLESH GOLEMS. HE WAS AFTER THE POTION. WE FOUGHT HIM OFF, BUT HE'LL BE BACK.
THE SCULPTOR. ANDREW'S RIGHT--GIVEN TIME, HE COULD CREATE AN ENDLESS SUPPLY OF HOMUNCULI FROM ANY DEAD FLESH. WE MUST STOP HIM WHILE WE CAN.
SPIKE AND I FOUGHT HIS GOONS AT THAT ECO-FRIENDLY CEMETERY. CLEANED THE PLACE OUT, BUT THE BOSS MAN WASN'T THERE.
THEN HE'LL BE SOMEWHERE ELSE THAT GIVES HIM READY ACCESS TO MATERIALS. A MYSTIC-ENERGY SEARCH OF SLAUGHTERHOUSES AND MEATPACKING PLANTS SEEMS IN ORDER.
GILES AND I WILL BE BUSY WITH COMBAT SPELLS. WE COULD USE SOMEONE TO UNRAVEL THE REANIMATION MAGIC. IF I GIVE YOU A TEMPORARY POWER BOOST, ARE YOU UP FOR IT?
ARE YOU KIDDING? WORKING WITH WILLOW ROSENBERG? IT'S EVERY COVEN'S DREAM!
SLAYER! GOT A MINUTE?
BUFFY, CAN WE TALK?
NO, AND NO. WE'VE GOT BUSINESS TO HANDLE.
ANDREW! POINT ME TOWARD SOMETHING I CAN STAB.

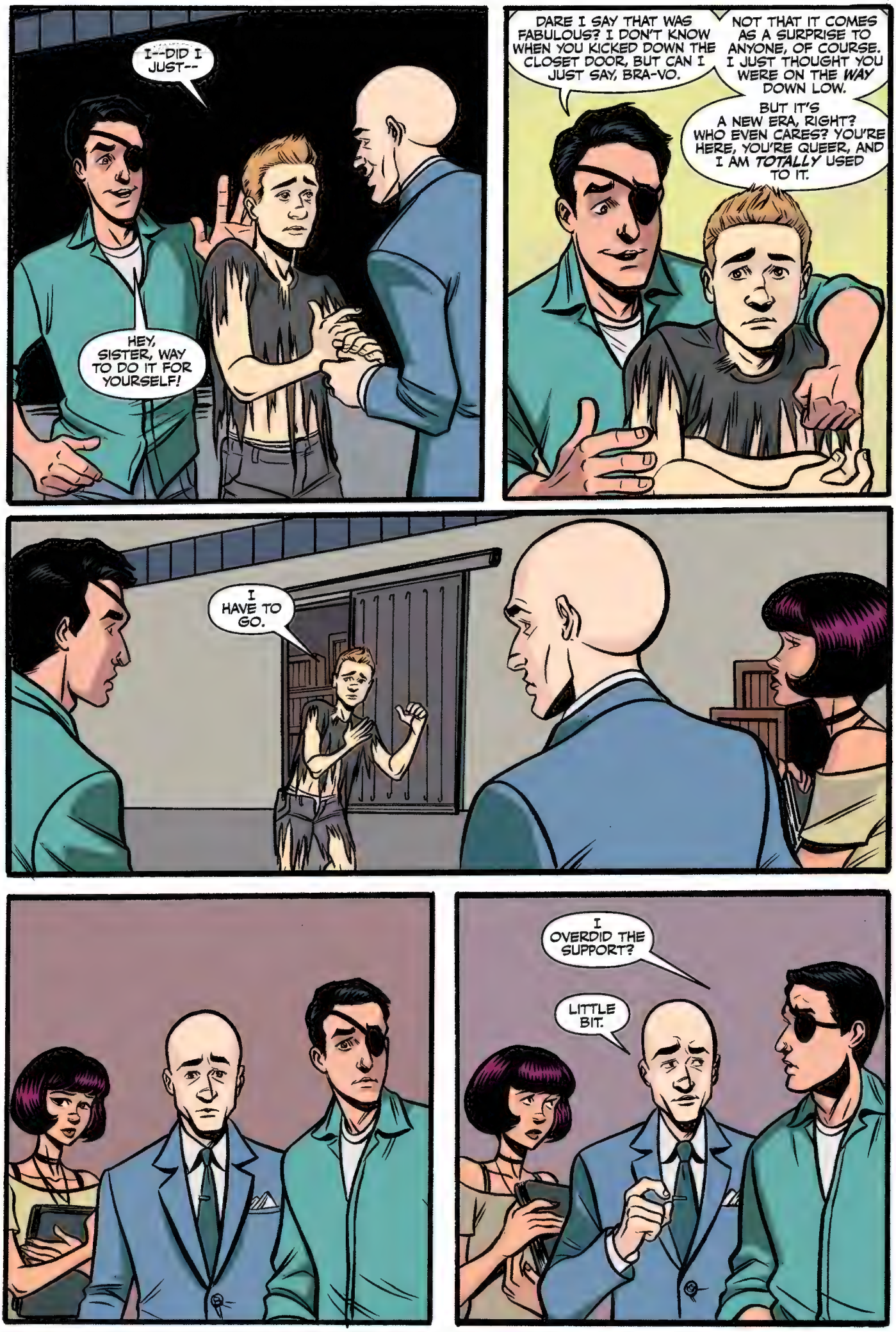
BUTCHERTOWN, SOUTH OF MARKET.
NATURAL MEAT CO.
OKAY. IF THE DOUBLEMEAT PALACE DIDN'T MAKE ME VEGAN...
...THIS OUGHTA DO IT.
STUPID MEAT. FLESH IS MY MEDIUM. THIS ENTIRE CITY FEEDS MY WORK.
YOU WILL DIE FOR MY ART!

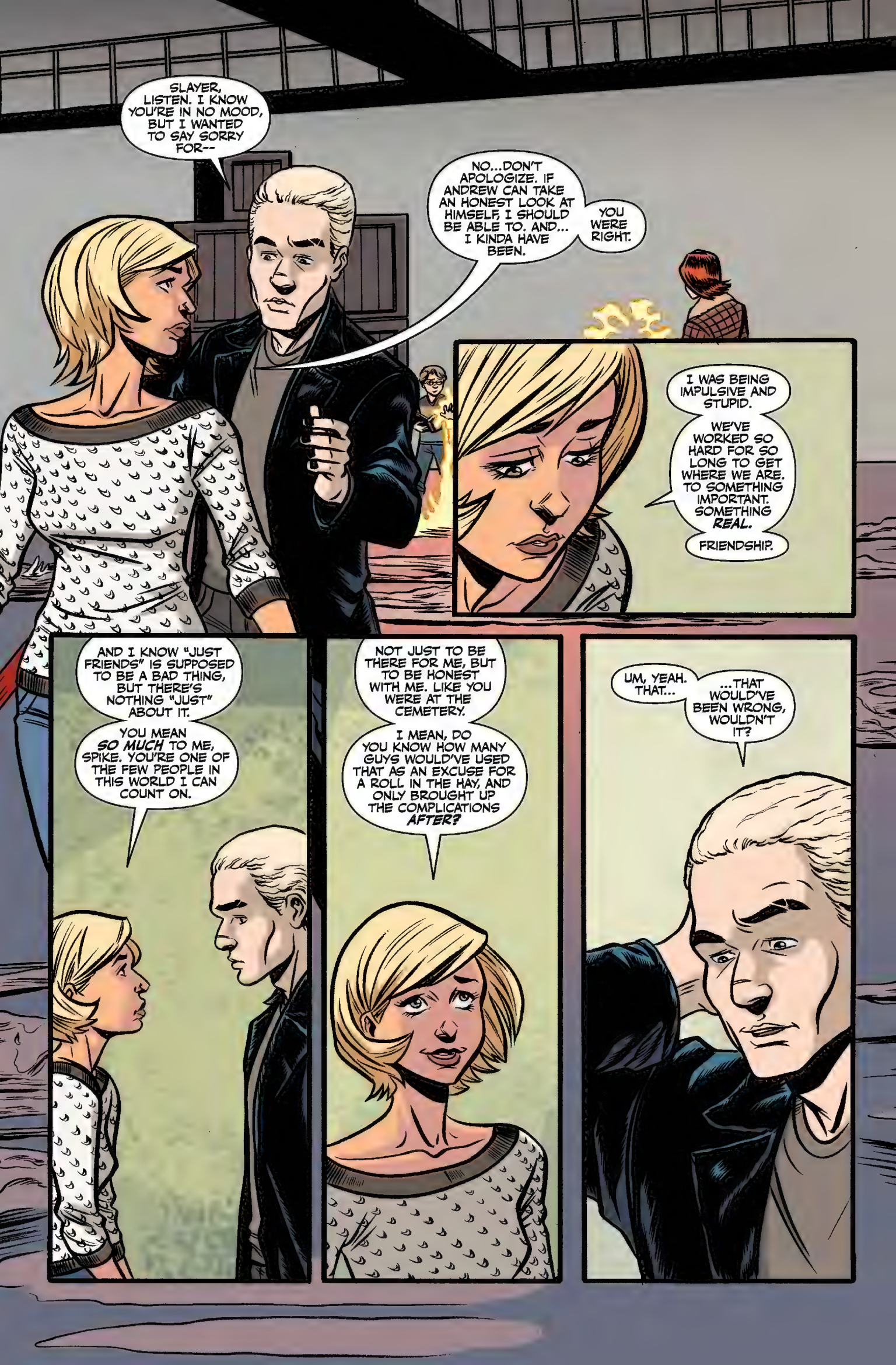
THE COUNTERSPELL'S NOT WORKING!
I THINK THE GOLEM'S JUST TOO BIG...OH.
OH, NO...
WELL, IF SIZE IS THE PROBLEM...
...I'M THE SOLUTION!
UM...LET'S NOT MAKE THAT MY CATCH PHRASE, OKAY?
SHRRTCH
GMFF!
ANDREW!

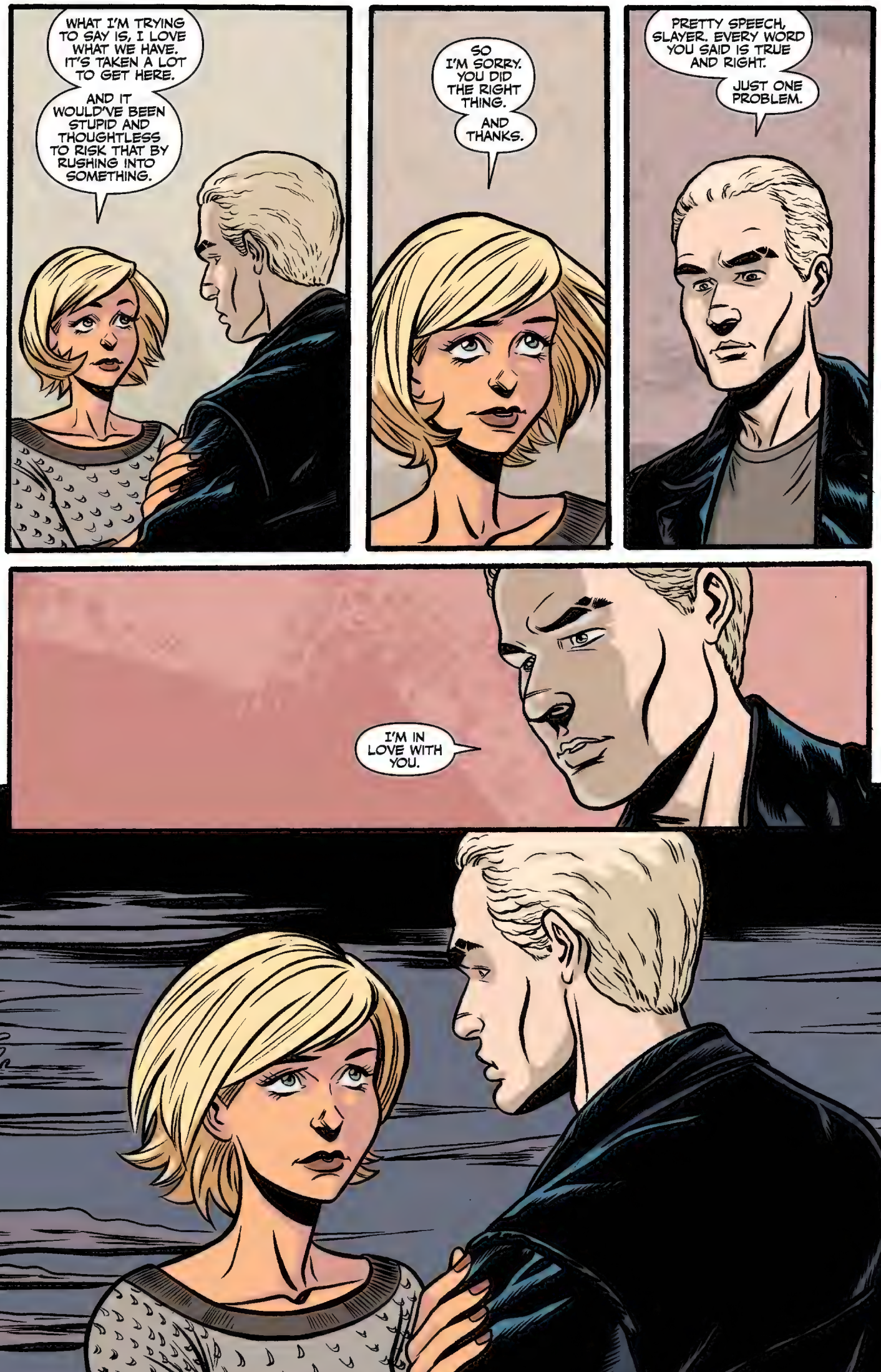
WHAT THE BLOODY--
THRRNNCHH
GROSS!
ANDREW'S SPLITTING IT IN HALF! HELP HIM!
QUICK! BEFORE IT MERGES AGAIN!
I...I THINK...
...I THINK IT'S WORKING!


OH, MAN, THAT IS RANK.
LOOKS LIKE THE PUPPET MASTER'S SCARPERED.
BUT WE DISARMED HIM. IT'LL TAKE HIM A WHILE TO BUILD UP THE RAW MATERIALS FOR A NEW ARMY. I'LL TRY TO TRACK HIM IN THE MEANTIME.
ARE YOU GUYS ALL RIGHT?
THAT WAS SO AWESOME!
YOU SAVED OUR LIVES. I--I DON'T KNOW HOW TO--
THANK ME?
I HAVE AN IDEA.

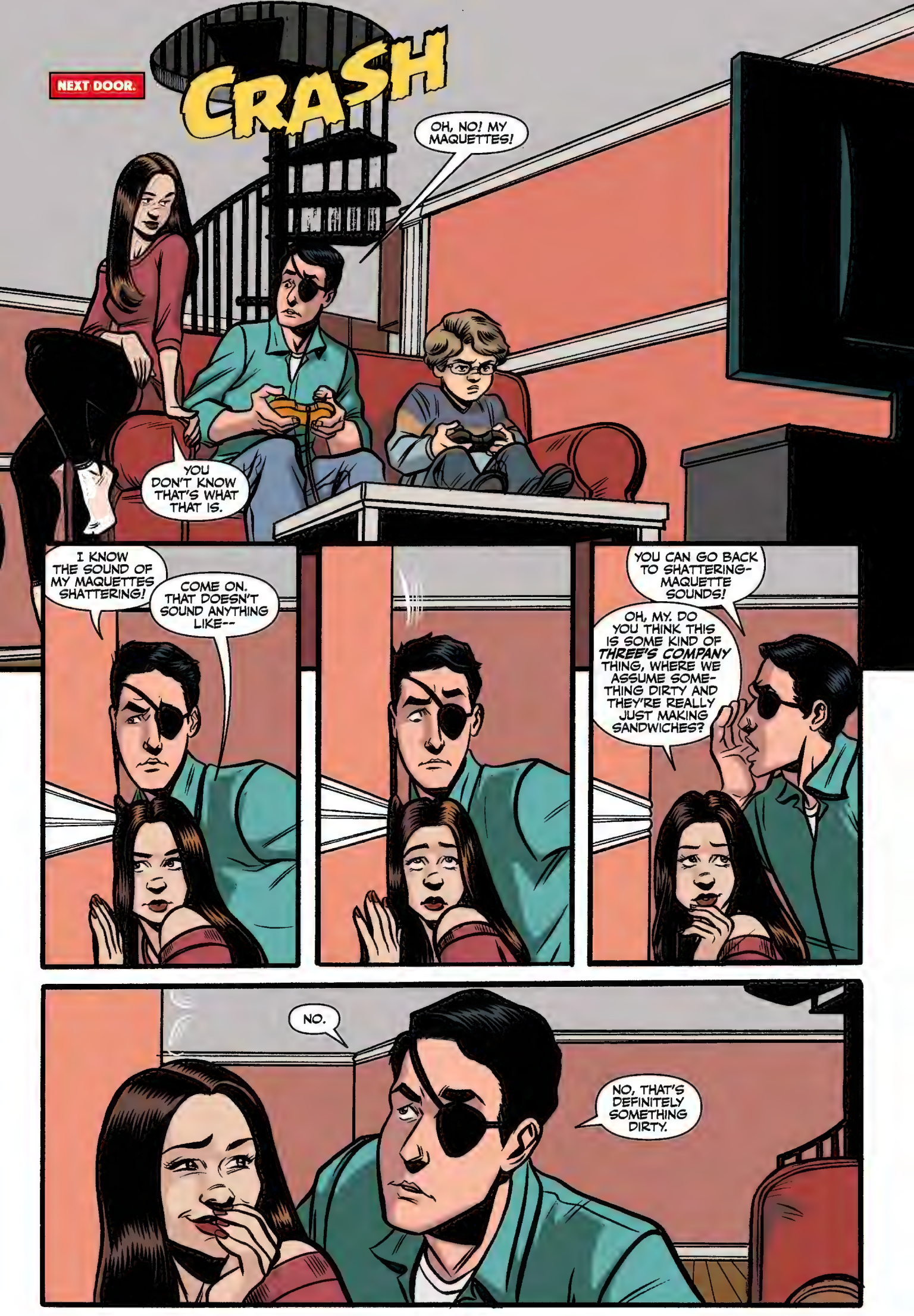

WHOA. YOU SEE THAT?
YES, I'M QUITE AWARE IT'S THE SUMMER OF LOVE FOR EVERYONE BUT ME. NOW BE QUIET. I NEED TO HELP BURN ALL THIS DECAYING FLESH BEFORE WE CATCH THE PLAGUE.
THAT WAS WELCOME, BUT SURPRISING. I WASN'T EVEN SURE YOU LIKED GUYS.
ME NEITHER... UNTIL NOW. I DECIDED IT'S TIME TO TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT MYSELF. REALLY BE HONEST ABOUT WHO I AM AND WHAT I--
UM, CLIVE? DID YOU JUST GET... HEAVIER?
OH.
WHOAAA!
HA!
I-- I'M BACK TO--
YOUR OLD SELF. WHATEVER THE POTION EMPOWERED YOU TO ACCOMPLISH, YOU DID IT. BEATING THE MONSTER, I GUESS.

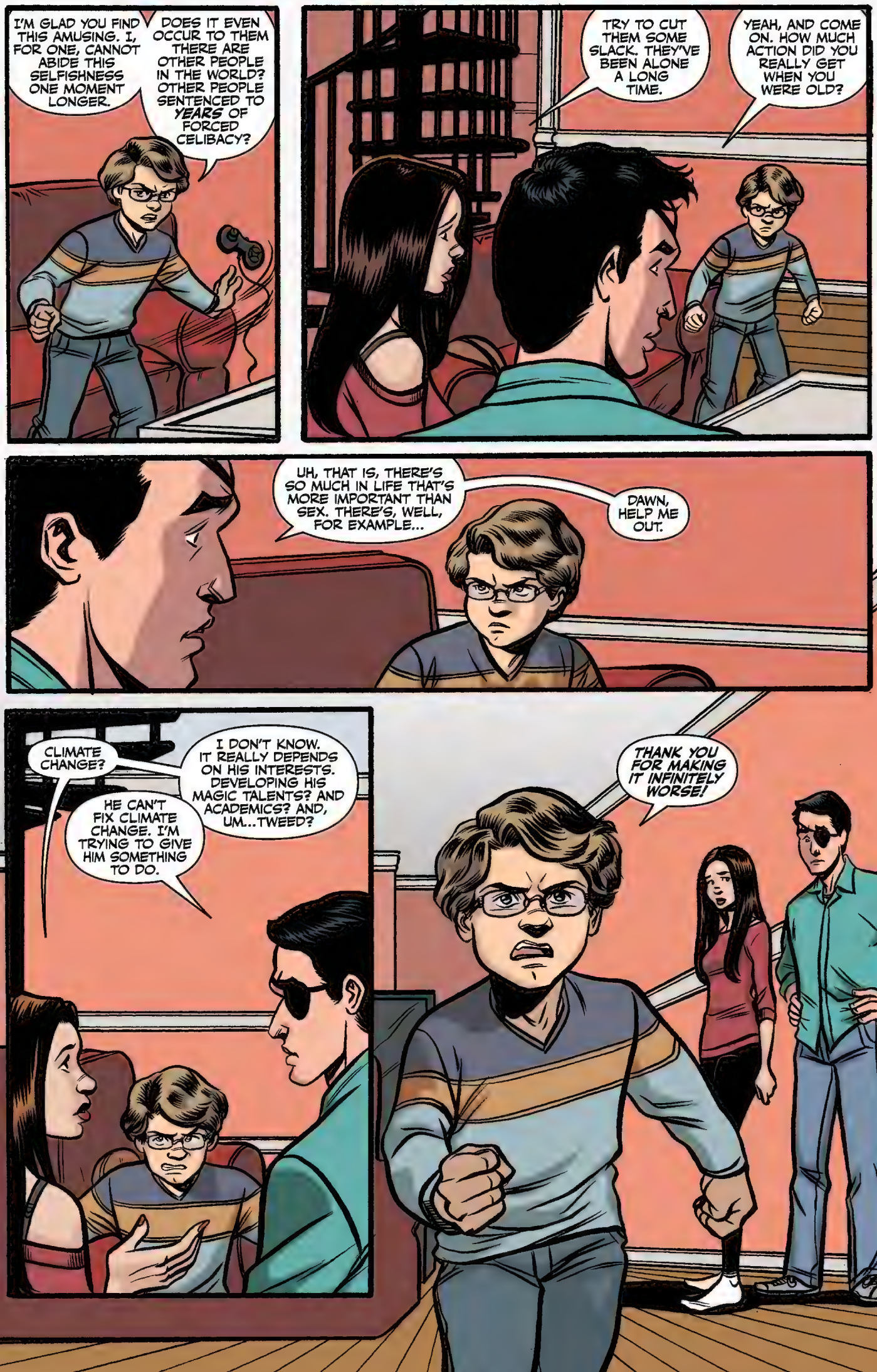

I--DID I JUST--
HEY, SISTER, WAY TO DO IT FOR YOURSELF!
DARE I SAY THAT WAS FABULOUS? I DON'T KNOW WHEN YOU KICKED DOWN THE CLOSET DOOR, BUT CAN I JUST SAY, BRA-VO.
NOT THAT IT COMES AS A SURPRISE TO ANYONE, OF COURSE. I JUST THOUGHT YOU WERE ON THE *WAY* DOWN LOW.
BUT IT'S A NEW ERA, RIGHT? WHO EVEN CARES? YOU'RE HERE, YOU'RE QUEER, AND I AM *TOTALLY* USED TO IT.
I HAVE TO GO.
I OVERDID THE SUPPORT?
LITTLE BIT.

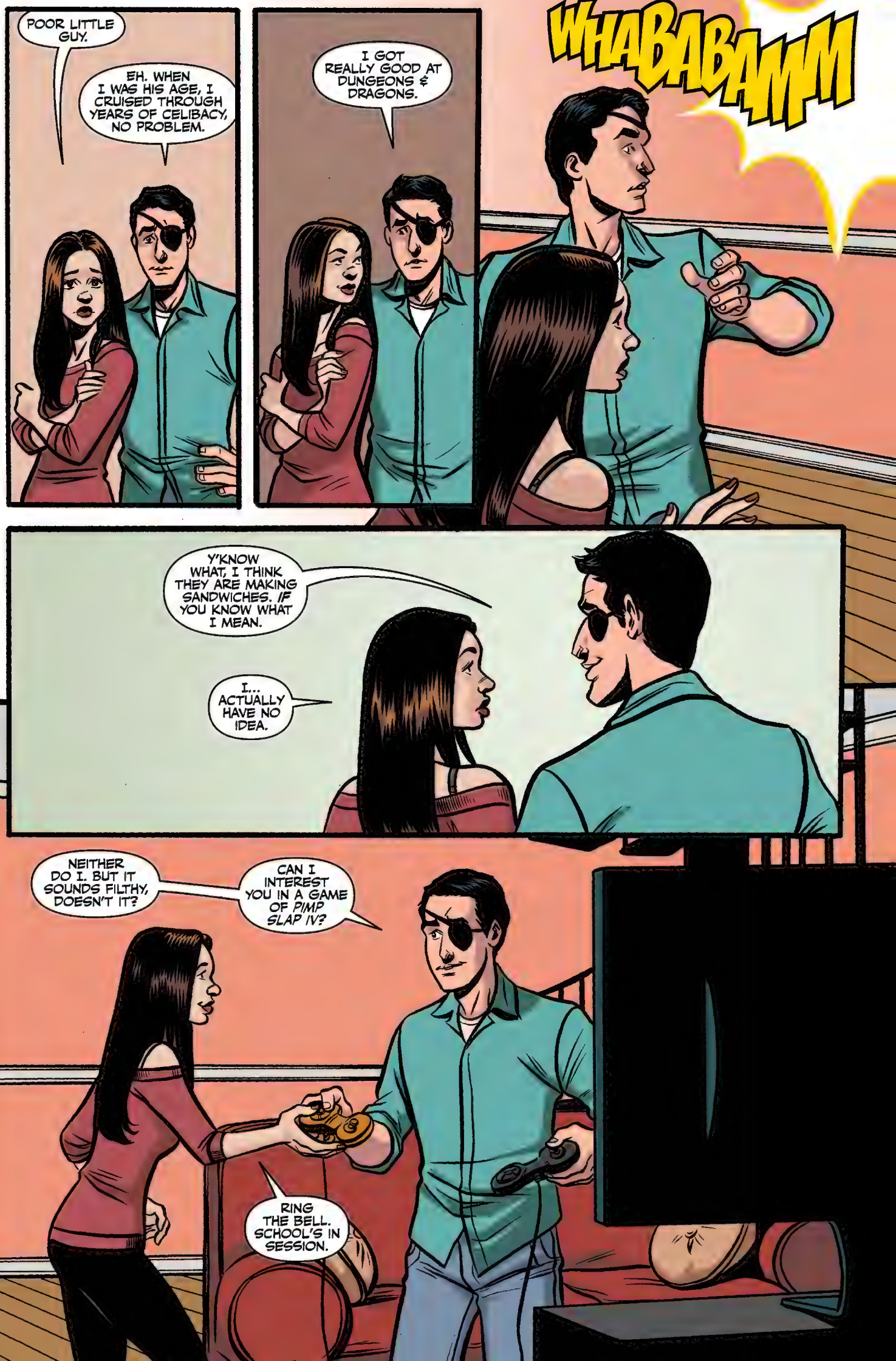

SLAYER, LISTEN. I KNOW YOU'RE IN NO MOOD, BUT I WANTED TO SAY SORRY FOR--
NO...DON'T APOLOGIZE. IF ANDREW CAN TAKE AN HONEST LOOK AT HIMSELF, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO. AND... I KINDA HAVE BEEN.
YOU WERE RIGHT.
I WAS BEING IMPULSIVE AND STUPID.
WE'VE WORKED SO HARD FOR SO LONG TO GET WHERE WE ARE. TO SOMETHING IMPORTANT. SOMETHING REAL.
FRIENDSHIP.
AND I KNOW "JUST FRIENDS" IS SUPPOSED TO BE A BAD THING, BUT THERE'S NOTHING "JUST" ABOUT IT.
YOU MEAN SO MUCH TO ME, SPIKE. YOU'RE ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD I CAN COUNT ON.
NOT JUST TO BE THERE FOR ME, BUT TO BE HONEST WITH ME. LIKE YOU WERE AT THE CEMETERY.
I MEAN, DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY GUYS WOULD'VE USED THAT AS AN EXCUSE FOR A ROLL IN THE HAY, AND ONLY BROUGHT UP THE COMPLICATIONS AFTER?
UM, YEAH. THAT...
...THAT WOULD'VE BEEN WRONG, WOULDN'T IT?


WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS, I LOVE WHAT WE HAVE. IT'S TAKEN A LOT TO GET HERE.
AND IT WOULD'VE BEEN STUPID AND THOUGHTLESS TO RISK THAT BY RUSHING INTO SOMETHING.
SO I'M SORRY. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.
AND THANKS.
PRETTY SPEECH, SLAYER. EVERY WORD YOU SAID IS TRUE AND RIGHT.
JUST ONE PROBLEM.
I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU.

XANDER AND SPIKE'S APARTMENT.
SLAM
WHAM
BRAMM

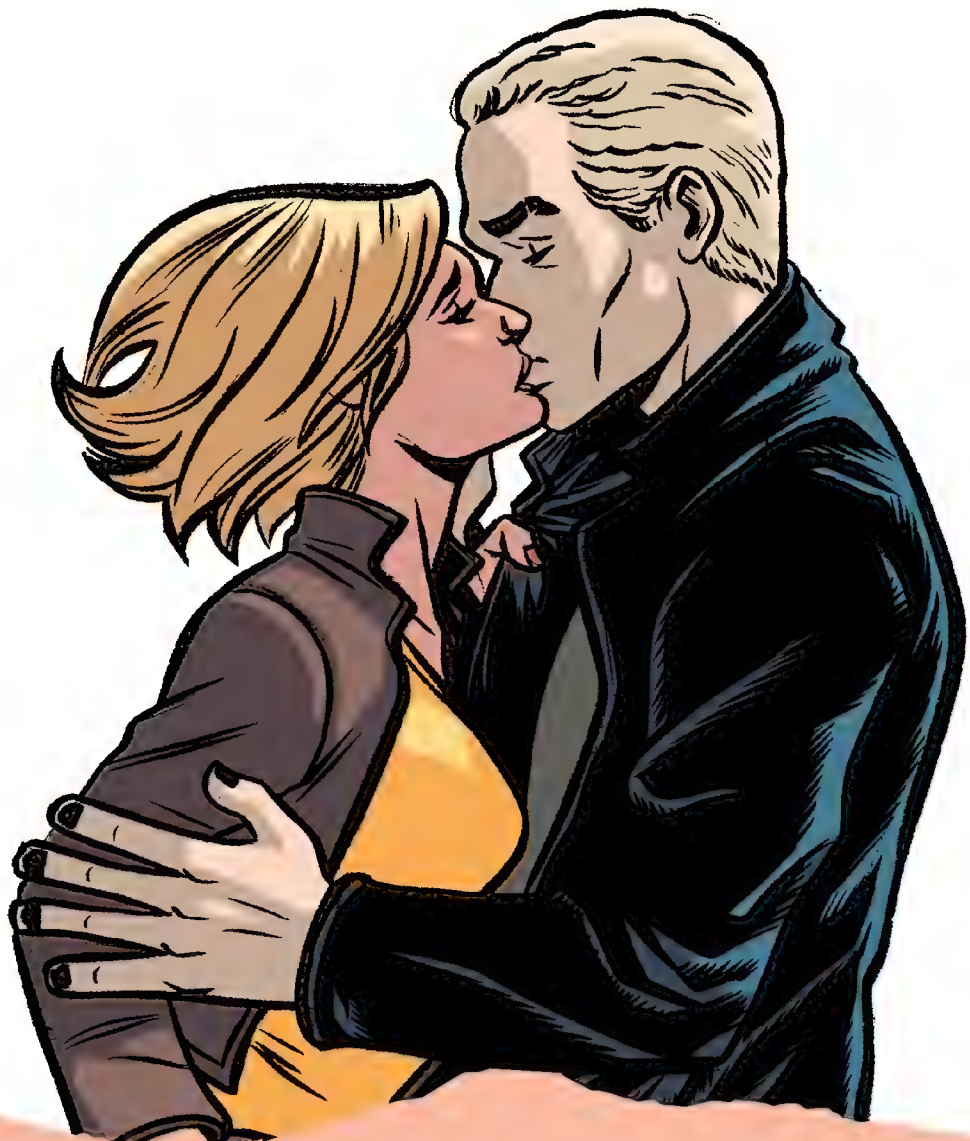

NEXT DOOR
CRASH
OH, NO! MY MAQUETTES!
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT'S WHAT THAT IS.
I KNOW THE SOUND OF MY MAQUETTES SHATTERING!
COME ON. THAT DOESN'T SOUND ANYTHING LIKE--
YOU CAN GO BACK TO SHATTERING-MAQUETTE SOUNDS!
OH, MY. DO YOU THINK THIS IS SOME KIND OF THREE'S COMPANY THING, WHERE WE ASSUME SOMETHING DIRTY AND THEY'RE REALLY JUST MAKING SANDWICHES?
NO.
NO, THAT'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING DIRTY.

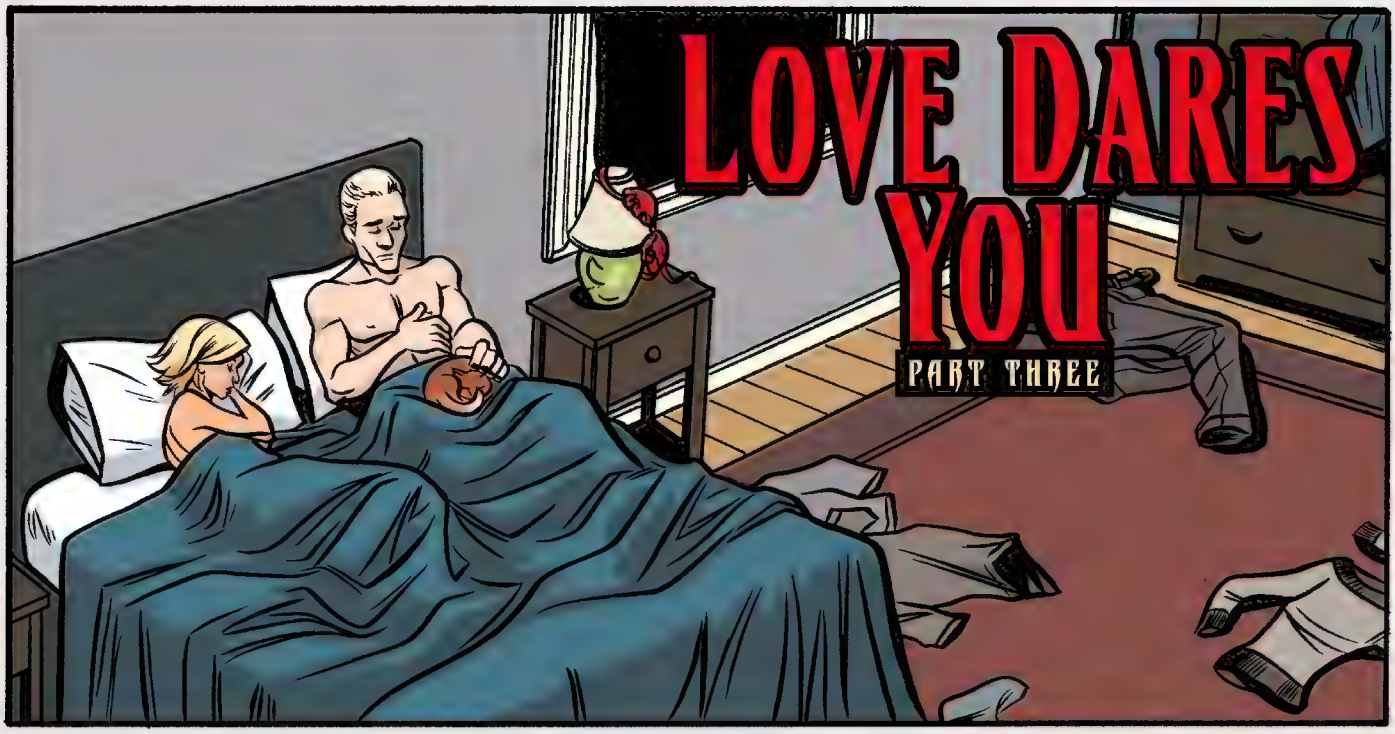

I'M GLAD YOU FIND THIS AMUSING. I, FOR ONE, CANNOT ABIDE THIS SELFISHNESS ONE MOMENT LONGER.
DOES IT EVEN OCCUR TO THEM THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD? OTHER PEOPLE SENTENCED TO *YEARS* OF FORCED CELIBACY?
TRY TO CUT THEM SOME SLACK. THEY'VE BEEN ALONE A LONG TIME.
YEAH, AND COME ON. HOW MUCH ACTION DID YOU REALLY GET WHEN YOU WERE OLD?
UH, THAT IS, THERE'S SO MUCH IN LIFE THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN SEX. THERE'S, WELL, FOR EXAMPLE...
DAWN, HELP ME OUT.
CLIMATE CHANGE?
I DON'T KNOW. IT REALLY DEPENDS ON HIS INTERESTS. DEVELOPING HIS MAGIC TALENTS? AND ACADEMICS? AND, UM...TWEED?
HE CAN'T FIX CLIMATE CHANGE. I'M TRYING TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DO.
THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT INFINITELY WORSE!


POOR LITTLE GUY.
EH. WHEN I WAS HIS AGE, I CRUISED THROUGH YEARS OF CELIBACY, NO PROBLEM.
I GOT REALLY GOOD AT DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.
WHABABAMMM
Y'KNOW WHAT, I THINK THEY ARE MAKING SANDWICHES. IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
I... ACTUALLY HAVE NO IDEA.
NEITHER DO I. BUT IT SOUNDS FILTHY, DOESN'T IT?
CAN I INTEREST YOU IN A GAME OF PIMP SLAP IV?
RING THE BELL. SCHOOL'S IN SESSION.

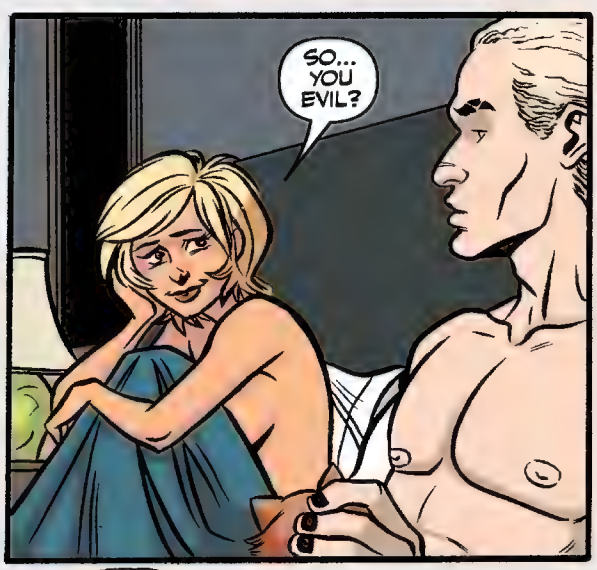
STUPID SOD.
AFRAID TO FALL ASLEEP 'CAUSE SHE MIGHT NOT BE HERE WHEN YOU WAKE.
YOU'RE ALREADY THE LUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD. JUST BE BLOODY HAPPY.
NOTHIN' COULD RUIN THIS.

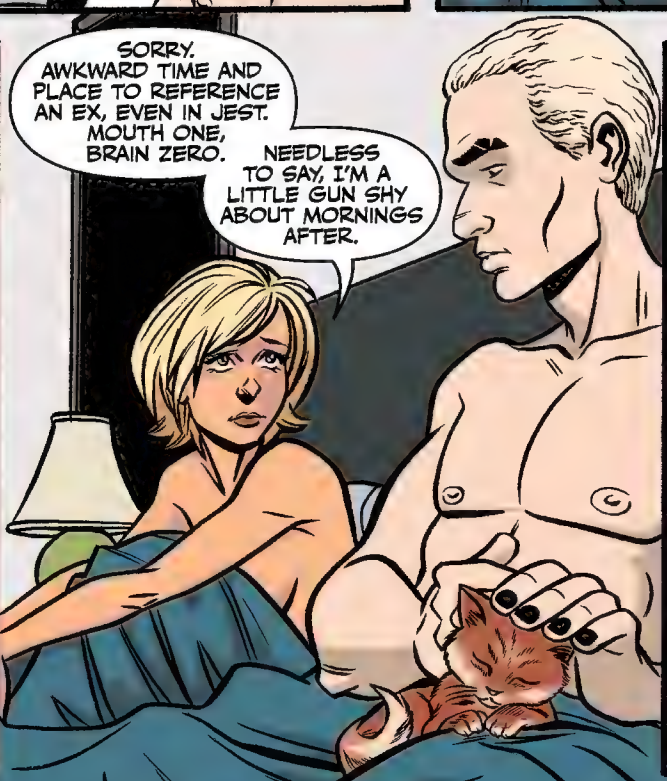
HNNHH!
HHH... HHH...
EASY. JUST A DREAM.
IT WAS JUST A DREAM...

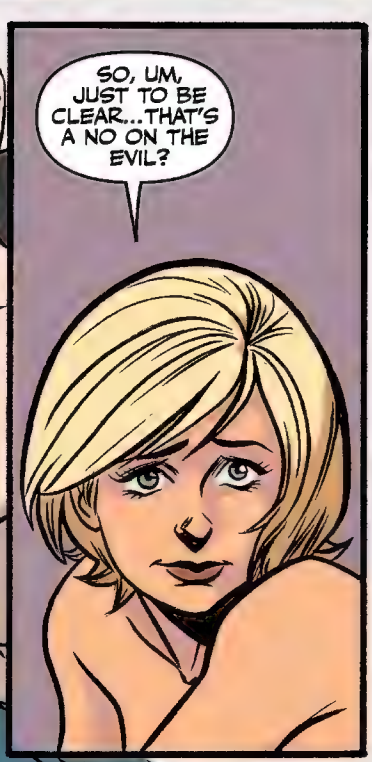



LOVE DARES YOU
PART THREE

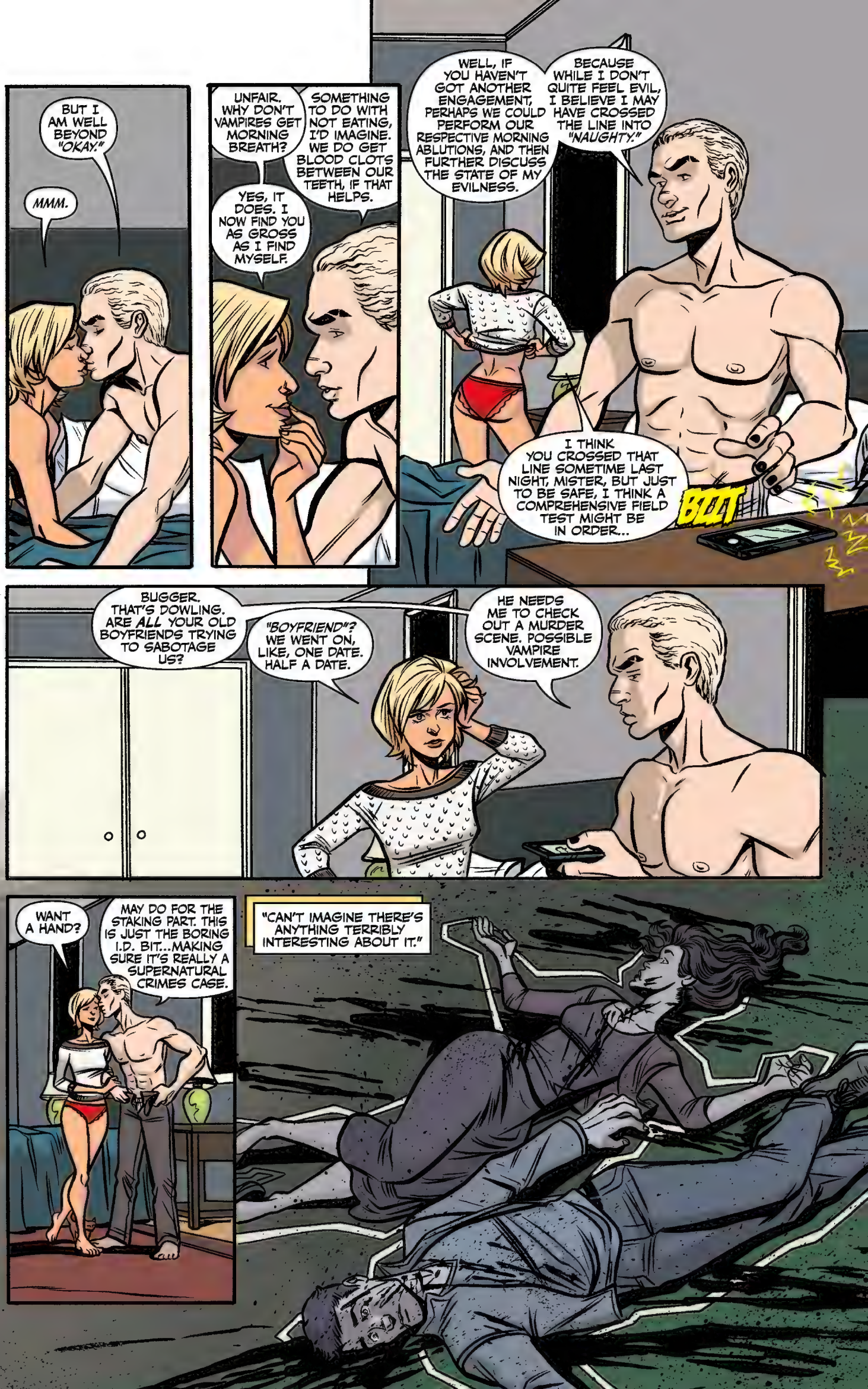
HEY.
HEY.

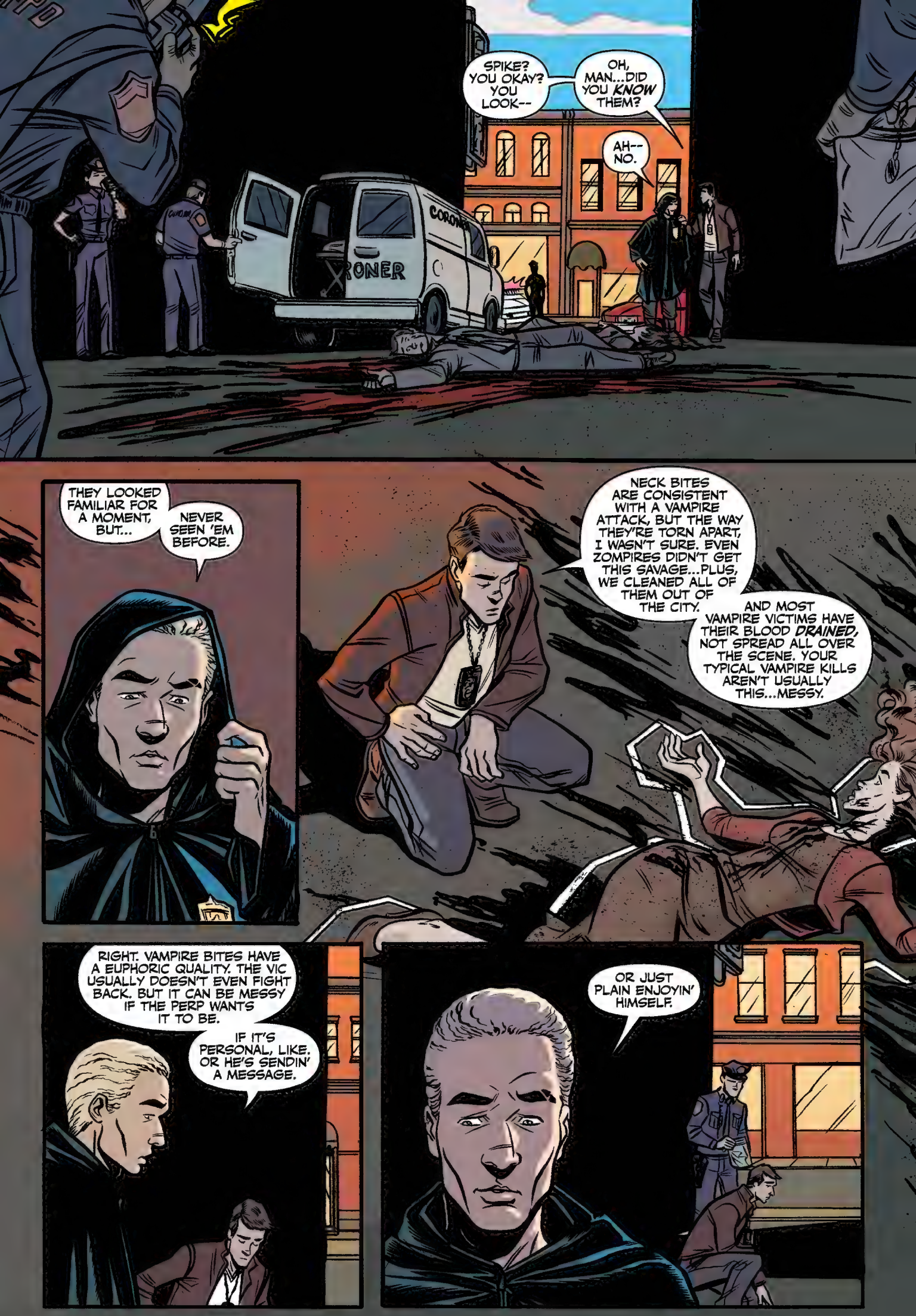

SO... YOU EVIL?

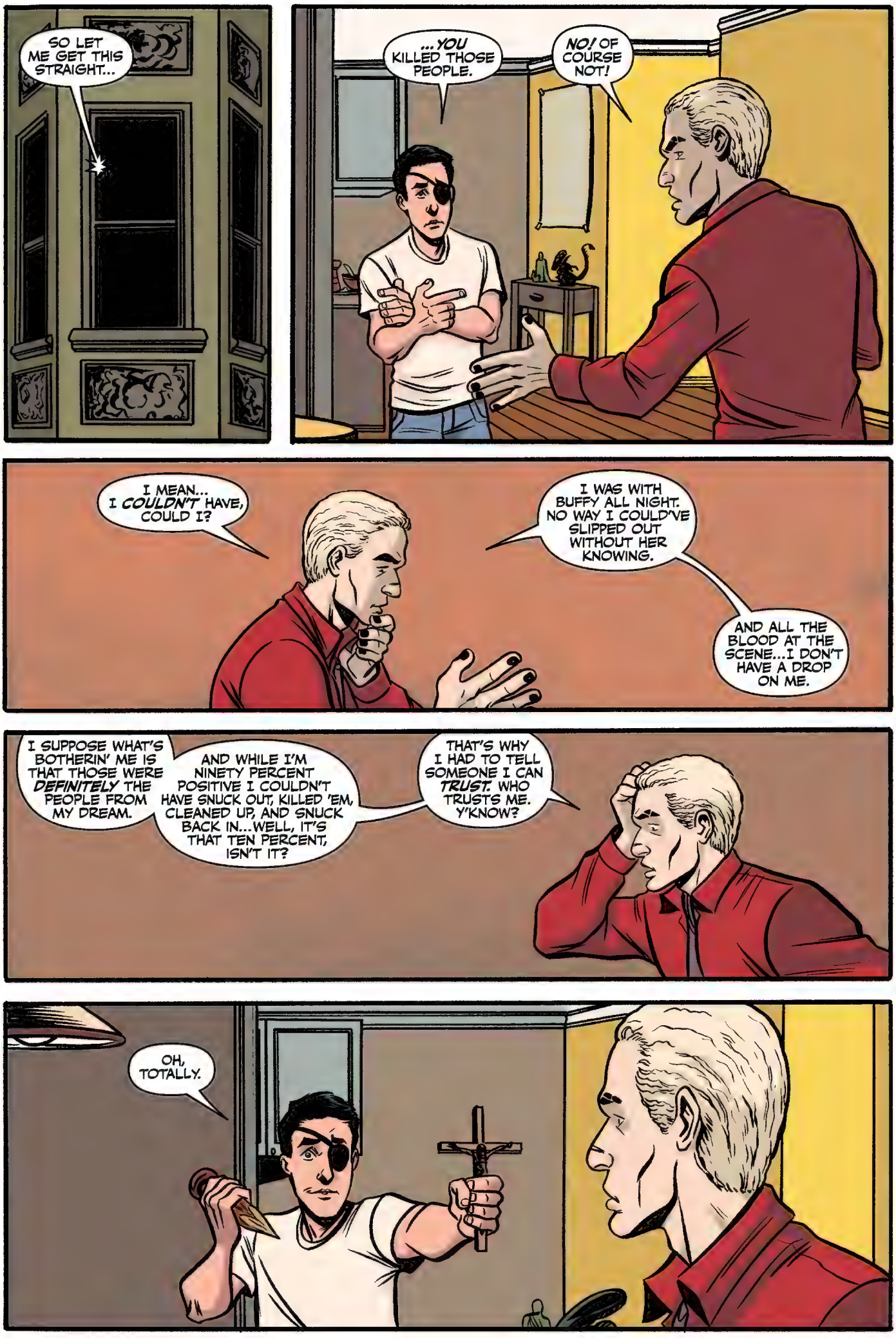

SORRY. AWKWARD TIME AND PLACE TO REFERENCE AN EX, EVEN IN JEST. MOUTH ONE, BRAIN ZERO.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, I'M A LITTLE GUN SHY ABOUT MORNINGS AFTER.


SO, UM, JUST TO BE CLEAR...THAT'S A NO ON THE EVIL?

NO MORE'N USUAL.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN TO JUMP INTO THE DEEP END OF THE AWKWARD POOL. BUT YOU KINDA SEEMED OFF EVEN BEFORE I SAID ANYTHING.
NAH, IT'S NOTHING. JUST...
WEIRD DREAM IS ALL.
STILL A BIT OUT OF SORTS FROM IT.


BUT I AM WELL BEYOND "OKAY."
MMM.
UNFAIR. WHY DON'T VAMPIRES GET MORNING BREATH?
SOMETHING TO DO WITH NOT EATING, I'D IMAGINE. WE DO GET BLOOD CLOTS BETWEEN OUR TEETH, IF THAT HELPS.
YES, IT DOES. I NOW FIND YOU AS GROSS AS I FIND MYSELF.
WELL, IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT, PERHAPS WE COULD PERFORM OUR RESPECTIVE MORNING ABLUTIONS, AND THEN FURTHER DISCUSS THE STATE OF MY EVILNESS.
BECAUSE WHILE I DON'T QUITE FEEL EVIL, I BELIEVE I MAY HAVE CROSSED THE LINE INTO "NAUGHTY."
I THINK YOU CROSSED THAT LINE SOMETIME LAST NIGHT, MISTER, BUT JUST TO BE SAFE, I THINK A COMPREHENSIVE FIELD TEST MIGHT BE IN ORDER...
BLOT
BUGGER. THAT'S DOWLING. ARE ALL YOUR OLD BOYFRIENDS TRYING TO SABOTAGE US?
"BOYFRIEND"? WE WENT ON, LIKE, ONE DATE. HALF A DATE.
HE NEEDS ME TO CHECK OUT A MURDER SCENE. POSSIBLE VAMPIRE INVOLVEMENT.
WANT A HAND?
MAY DO FOR THE STAKING PART. THIS IS JUST THE BORING I.D. BIT...MAKING SURE IT'S REALLY A SUPERNATURAL CRIMES CASE.
"CAN'T IMAGINE THERE'S ANYTHING TERRIBLY INTERESTING ABOUT IT."

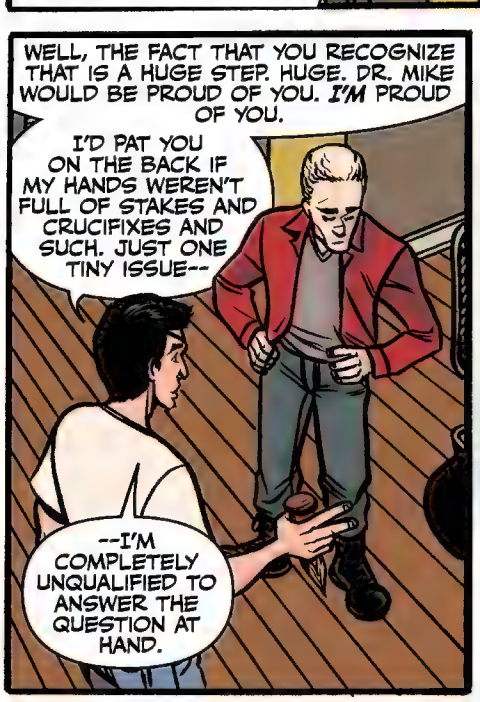

SPIKE? YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK--
OH, MAN...DID YOU KNOW THEM?
AH-- NO.
CORONER
THEY LOOKED FAMILIAR FOR A MOMENT, BUT...
NEVER SEEN 'EM BEFORE.
NECK BITES ARE CONSISTENT WITH A VAMPIRE ATTACK, BUT THE WAY THEY'RE TORN APART, I WASN'T SURE. EVEN ZOMPIRES DIDN'T GET THIS SAVAGE...PLUS, WE CLEANED ALL OF THEM OUT OF THE CITY.
AND MOST VAMPIRE VICTIMS HAVE THEIR BLOOD DRAINED, NOT SPREAD ALL OVER THE SCENE. YOUR TYPICAL VAMPIRE KILLS AREN'T USUALLY THIS...MESSY.
RIGHT. VAMPIRE BITES HAVE A EUPHORIC QUALITY. THE VIC USUALLY DOESN'T EVEN FIGHT BACK. BUT IT CAN BE MESSY IF THE PERP WANTS IT TO BE.
IF IT'S PERSONAL, LIKE. OR HE'S SENDIN' A MESSAGE.
OR JUST PLAIN ENJOYIN' HIMSELF.


SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT...
...YOU KILLED THOSE PEOPLE.
NO! OF COURSE NOT!
I MEAN... I COULDN'T HAVE, COULD I?
I WAS WITH BUFFY ALL NIGHT. NO WAY I COULD'VE SLIPPED OUT WITHOUT HER KNOWING.
AND ALL THE BLOOD AT THE SCENE...I DON'T HAVE A DROP ON ME.
I SUPPOSE WHAT'S BOTHERIN' ME IS THAT THOSE WERE DEFINITELY THE PEOPLE FROM MY DREAM.
AND WHILE I'M NINETY PERCENT POSITIVE I COULDN'T HAVE SNUCK OUT, KILLED 'EM, CLEANED UP, AND SNUCK BACK IN...WELL, IT'S THAT TEN PERCENT, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S WHY I HAD TO TELL SOMEONE I CAN TRUST. WHO TRUSTS ME. Y'KNOW?
OH, TOTALLY.

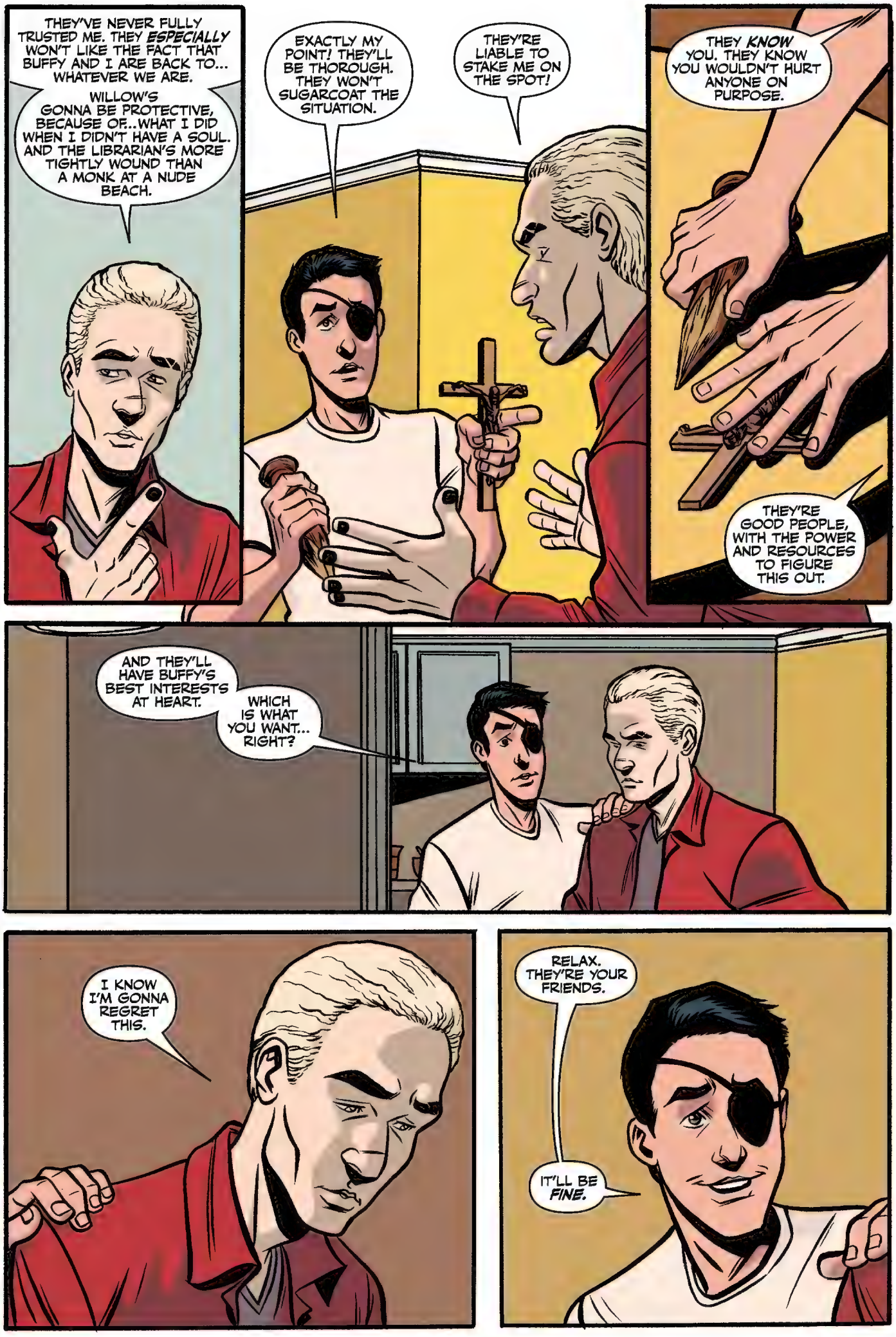
REALLY?
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY.
NO, NOT AT ALL. YOU WALK AROUND ACCESSORIZED LIKE BLOODY VAN HELSING JUST AS A FASHION CHOICE.

HEY, I'M NOT SAYING YOU *WANT* TO BE SLAUGHTERING INNOCENTS. BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THIS SORT OF THING DOESN'T HAVE A PRECEDENT.
REMEMBER THE *FIRST EVIL?* ITS HYPNOTIC TRIGGER? YOU WANDERING AROUND KILLING FOLKS AND NOT KNOWING IT AFTERWARD?

YOU DO HAVE A POINT. QUITE LITERALLY.
THAT'S WHY I CAME TO YOU. I...CAN'T TRUST MYSELF TO HANDLE THIS. NOT ALONE.

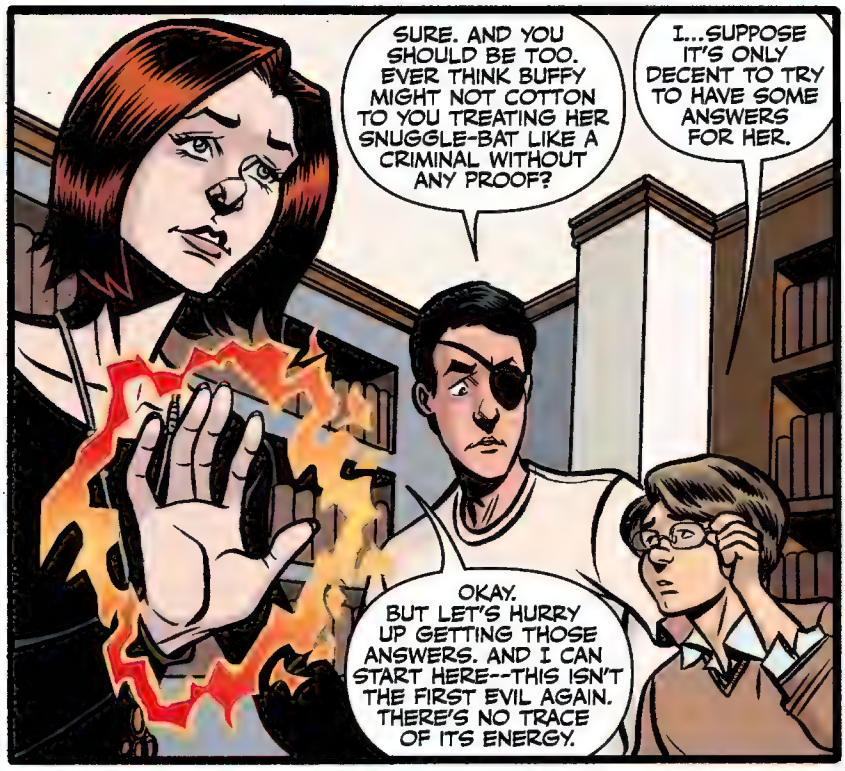

WELL, THE FACT THAT YOU RECOGNIZE THAT IS A HUGE STEP. HUGE. DR. MIKE WOULD BE PROUD OF YOU. *I'M* PROUD OF YOU.
I'D PAT YOU ON THE BACK IF MY HANDS WEREN'T FULL OF STAKES AND CRUCIFIXES AND SUCH. JUST ONE TINY ISSUE--
--I'M COMPLETELY UNQUALIFIED TO ANSWER THE QUESTION AT HAND.

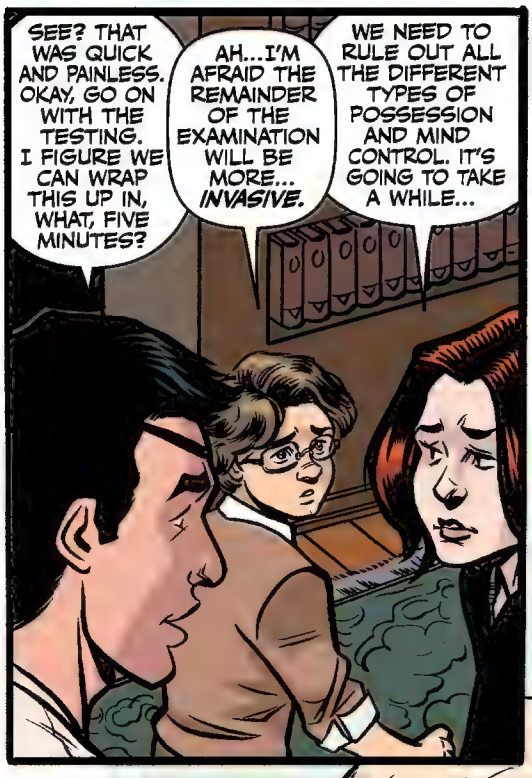
WE HAVE TO BRING IN GILES AND WILLOW.
OH, *HELL* NO.


THEY'VE NEVER FULLY TRUSTED ME. THEY ESPECIALLY WON'T LIKE THE FACT THAT BUFFY AND I ARE BACK TO... WHATEVER WE ARE.
WILLOW'S GONNA BE PROTECTIVE, BECAUSE OF...WHAT I DID WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE A SOUL. AND THE LIBRARIAN'S MORE TIGHTLY WOUND THAN A MONK AT A NUDE BEACH.
EXACTLY MY POINT! THEY'LL BE THOROUGH. THEY WON'T SUGARCOAT THE SITUATION.
THEY'RE LIABLE TO STAKE ME ON THE SPOT!
THEY KNOW YOU. THEY KNOW YOU WOULDN'T HURT ANYONE ON PURPOSE.
THEY'RE GOOD PEOPLE, WITH THE POWER AND RESOURCES TO FIGURE THIS OUT.
AND THEY'LL HAVE BUFFY'S BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.
WHICH IS WHAT YOU WANT... RIGHT?
I KNOW I'M GONNA REGRET THIS.
RELAX. THEY'RE YOUR FRIENDS.
IT'LL BE FINE.

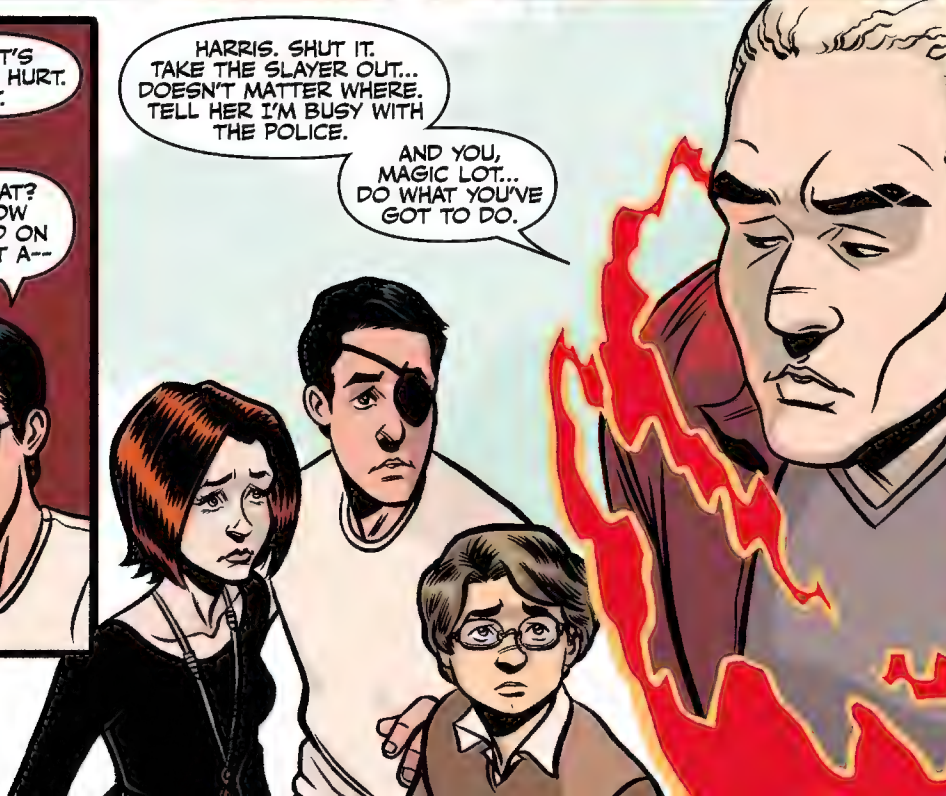
GILES'S APARTMENT.
THIS IS NOT MY IDEA OF "FINE," HARRIS!
HEY! WHAT'S WITH THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK? SPIKE CAME TO YOU OPENLY AND HONESTLY!
ONE--THE "CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK" ARE NOT REAL. THEY'RE A SILLY SPELL FROM YOUR CHILDISH COMIC BOOKS. THESE ARE THE SCARLET BONDS OF... IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.
THE POINT IS, YOU MUST RECOGNIZE THE DANGER. IT IS IMPERATIVE WE EXERCISE THE UTMOST CAUTION.
SPIKE, I'M SORRY. BUT EVEN AFTER YOU GOT YOUR SOUL, THERE'S BEEN A HISTORY OF--
I KNOW. THE BLOODY FIRST EVIL. HELL, I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE ANOTHER SIREN, OR MIND CONTROL, OR...
...OR I'VE JUST FINALLY GONE OFF MY HEAD.
LOOK, I GET IT. I DON'T EVEN MIND. I'VE JUST GOT ONE FAVOR TO ASK, ALL RIGHT?
DON'T TELL BUFFY. NOT YET.

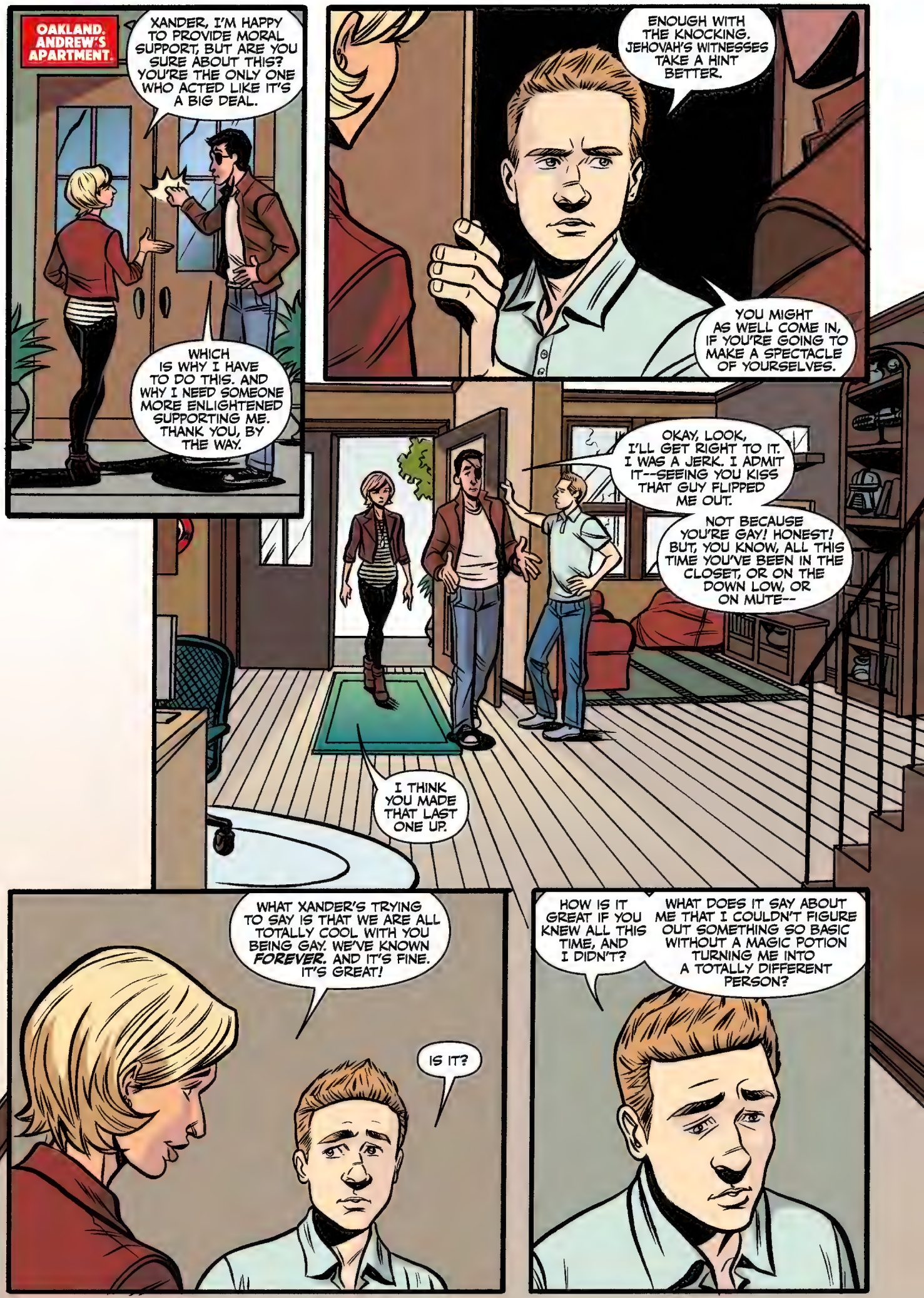
I WON'T LIE TO HER.
AIN'T ASKIN' YOU TO. JUST WAIT A BIT TO SAY ANYTHING. UNTIL WE KNOW MORE.
YOU'RE MOTIVATED BY PURELY SELFISH REASONS.

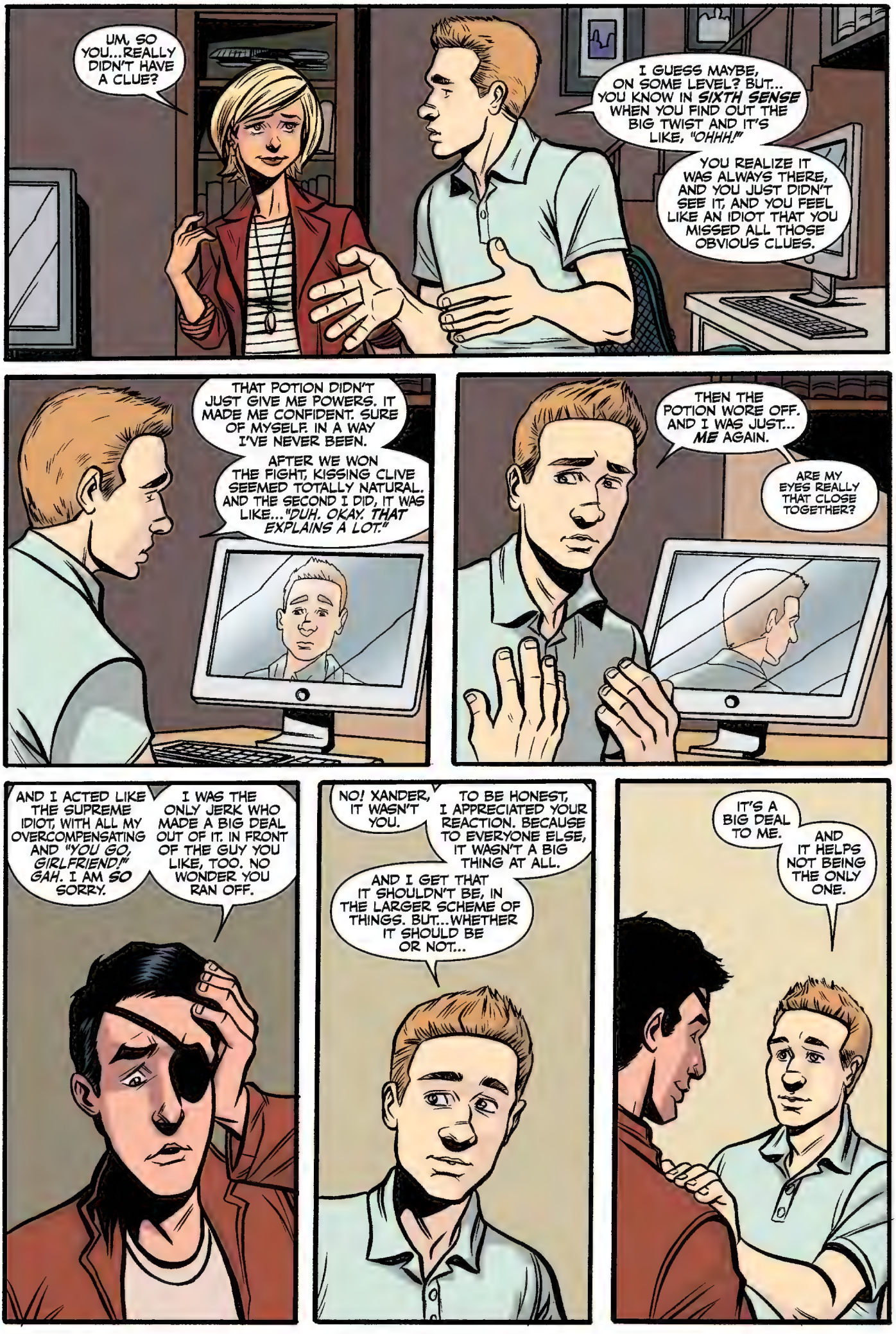

SURE. AND YOU SHOULD BE TOO. EVER THINK BUFFY MIGHT NOT COTTON TO YOU TREATING HER SNUGGLE-BAT LIKE A CRIMINAL WITHOUT ANY PROOF?
I...SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY DECENT TO TRY TO HAVE SOME ANSWERS FOR HER.
OKAY. BUT LET'S HURRY UP GETTING THOSE ANSWERS. AND I CAN START HERE--THIS ISN'T THE FIRST EVIL AGAIN. THERE'S NO TRACE OF IT'S ENERGY.


SEE? THAT WAS QUICK AND PAINLESS. OKAY, GO ON WITH THE TESTING. I FIGURE WE CAN WRAP THIS UP IN, WHAT, FIVE MINUTES?
AH...I'M AFRAID THE REMAINDER OF THE EXAMINATION WILL BE MORE... *INVASIVE.*
WE NEED TO RULE OUT ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF POSSESSION AND MIND CONTROL. IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE...

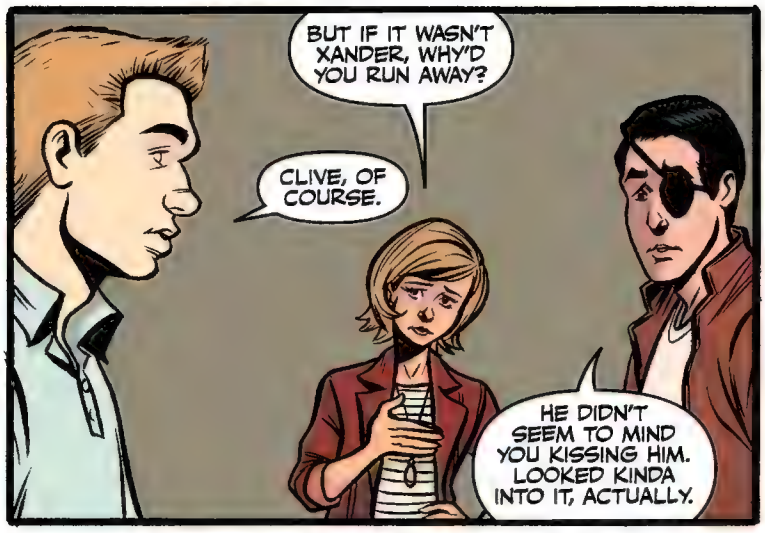
...AND IT'S GOING TO HURT. A LOT.
WHAT? NOW HOLD ON JUST A--

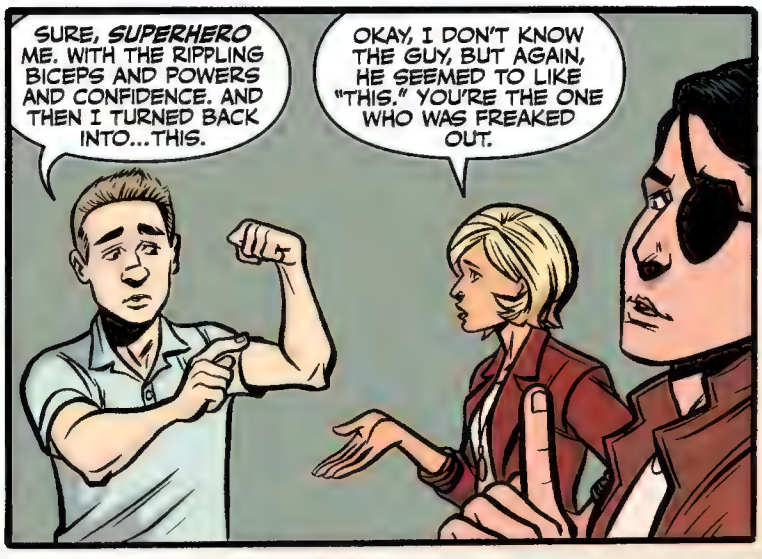

HARRIS. SHUT IT. TAKE THE SLAYER OUT... DOESN'T MATTER WHERE. TELL HER I'M BUSY WITH THE POLICE.
AND YOU, MAGIC LOT... DO WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO.


OAKLAND. ANDREW'S APARTMENT.
XANDER, I'M HAPPY TO PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT, BUT ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO ACTED LIKE IT'S A BIG DEAL.
WHICH IS WHY I HAVE TO DO THIS. AND WHY I NEED SOMEONE MORE ENLIGHTENED SUPPORTING ME. THANK YOU, BY THE WAY.
ENOUGH WITH THE KNOCKING. JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TAKE A HINT BETTER.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL COME IN, IF YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE A SPECTACLE OF YOURSELVES.
OKAY, LOOK, I'LL GET RIGHT TO IT. I WAS A JERK. I ADMIT IT--SEEING YOU KISS THAT GUY FLIPPED ME OUT.
NOT BECAUSE YOU'RE GAY! HONEST! BUT, YOU KNOW, ALL THIS TIME YOU'VE BEEN IN THE CLOSET, OR ON THE DOWN LOW, OR ON MUTE--
I THINK YOU MADE THAT LAST ONE UP.
WHAT XANDER'S TRYING TO SAY IS THAT WE ARE ALL TOTALLY COOL WITH YOU BEING GAY. WE'VE KNOWN FOREVER. AND IT'S FINE. IT'S GREAT!
IS IT?
HOW IS IT GREAT IF YOU KNEW ALL THIS TIME, AND I DIDN'T?
WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT ME THAT I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT SOMETHING SO BASIC WITHOUT A MAGIC POTION TURNING ME INTO A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON?


UM, SO YOU...REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE?
I GUESS MAYBE, ON SOME LEVEL? BUT... YOU KNOW IN *SIXTH SENSE* WHEN YOU FIND OUT THE BIG TWIST AND IT'S LIKE, "OHHH!"
YOU REALIZE IT WAS ALWAYS THERE, AND YOU JUST DIDN'T SEE IT, AND YOU FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT THAT YOU MISSED ALL THOSE OBVIOUS CLUES.
THAT POTION DIDN'T JUST GIVE ME POWERS. IT MADE ME CONFIDENT. SURE OF MYSELF. IN A WAY I'VE NEVER BEEN.
AFTER WE WON THE FIGHT, KISSING CLIVE SEEMED TOTALLY NATURAL. AND THE SECOND I DID, IT WAS LIKE..."*DUH. OKAY. THAT EXPLAINS A LOT.*"
THEN THE POTION WORE OFF. AND I WAS JUST... *ME* AGAIN.
ARE MY EYES REALLY THAT CLOSE TOGETHER?
AND I ACTED LIKE THE SUPREME IDIOT, WITH ALL MY OVERCOMPENSATING AND "*YOU GO, GIRLFRIEND!*" *GAH*. I AM *SO* SORRY.
I WAS THE ONLY JERK WHO MADE A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT. IN FRONT OF THE GUY YOU LIKE, TOO. NO WONDER YOU RAN OFF.
NO! XANDER, IT WASN'T YOU.
TO BE HONEST, I APPRECIATED YOUR REACTION. BECAUSE TO EVERYONE ELSE, IT WASN'T A BIG THING AT ALL.
AND I GET THAT IT SHOULDN'T BE, IN THE LARGER SCHEME OF THINGS. BUT...WHETHER IT SHOULD BE OR NOT...
IT'S A BIG DEAL TO ME.
AND IT HELPS NOT BEING THE ONLY ONE.

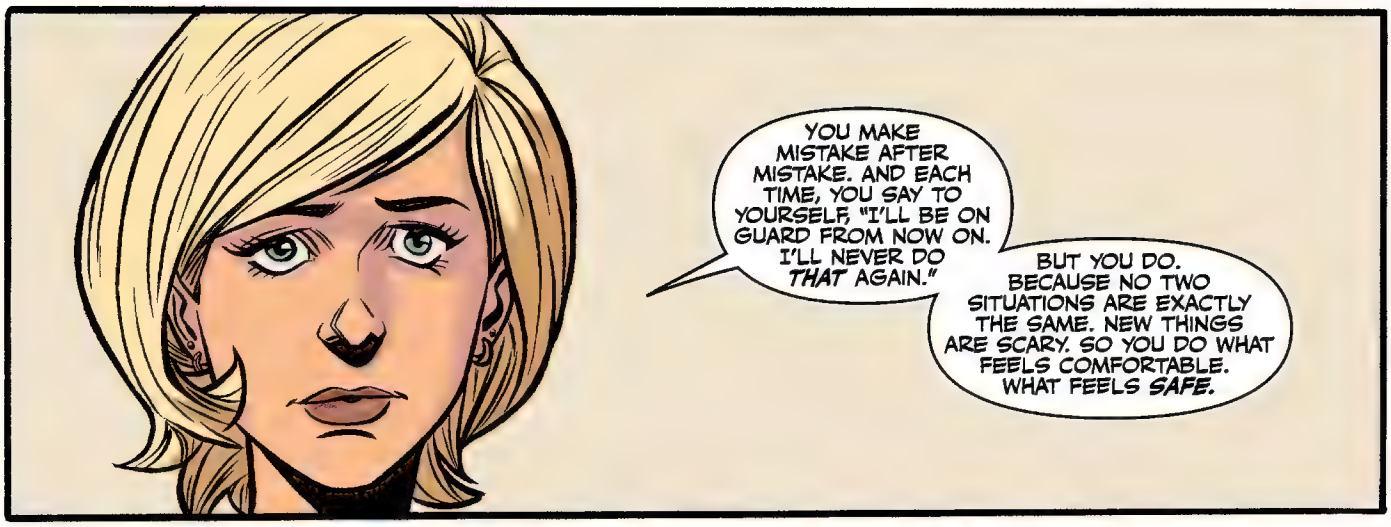
WELL, SOME OF US TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HOW OTHER PEOPLE FEEL.
I WON'T EVEN DIGNIFY.
LOOK, ANDREW, THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HOW YOU FELT. I...ALSO MAY BE GUILTY OF NOT SEEING WHAT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

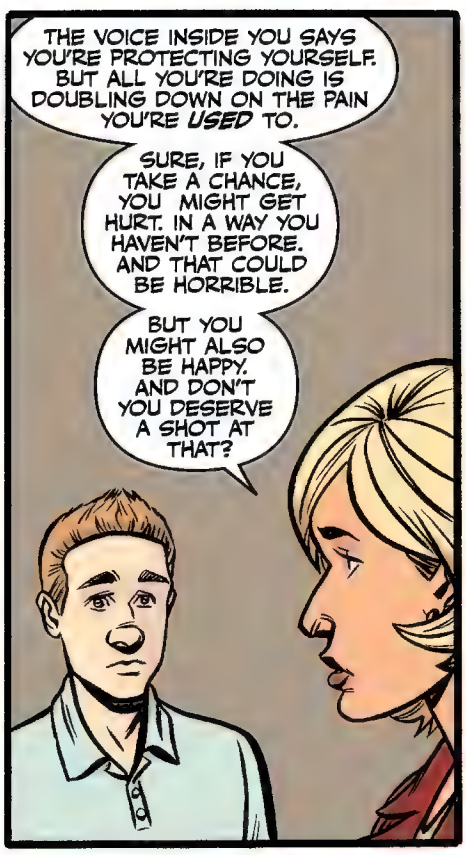

BUT IF IT WASN'T XANDER, WHY'D YOU RUN AWAY?
CLIVE, OF COURSE.
HE DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND YOU KISSING HIM. LOOKED KINDA INTO IT, ACTUALLY.


SURE, SUPERHERO ME. WITH THE RIPPLING BICEPS AND POWERS AND CONFIDENCE. AND THEN I TURNED BACK INTO...THIS.
OKAY, I DON'T KNOW THE GUY, BUT AGAIN, HE SEEMED TO LIKE "THIS." YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS FREAKED OUT.

ALLOW ME TO GIVE YOU THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN IN THERAPY THREE WHOLE MONTHS.
YOU'RE UPSET THAT YOU SPENT ALL THIS TIME AVOIDING SOMETHING YOU SHOULD'VE FIGURED OUT. UNDERSTANDABLE. BUT HOW ARE YOU DEALING WITH IT?

BY AVOIDING IT. FALLING INTO THE EXACT SAME DYSFUNCTIONAL PATTERN.
BOOM. I JUST BLEW YOUR MIND, DIDN'T I?
XANDER MAY HAVE PUT IT IN THE MOST OBNOXIOUS WAY POSSIBLE, BUT HE'S NOT WRONG.

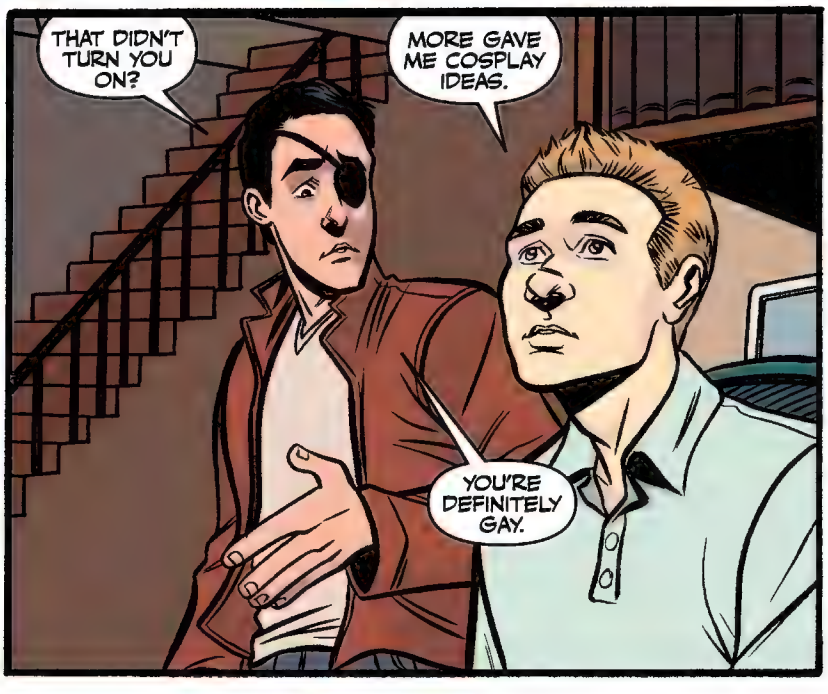

YOU MAKE MISTAKE AFTER MISTAKE. AND EACH TIME, YOU SAY TO YOURSELF, "I'LL BE ON GUARD FROM NOW ON. I'LL NEVER DO *THAT* AGAIN."
BUT YOU DO. BECAUSE NO TWO SITUATIONS ARE EXACTLY THE SAME. NEW THINGS ARE SCARY. SO YOU DO WHAT FEELS COMFORTABLE. WHAT FEELS *SAFE.*


THE VOICE INSIDE YOU SAYS YOU'RE PROTECTING YOURSELF. BUT ALL YOU'RE DOING IS DOUBLING DOWN ON THE PAIN YOU'RE *USED* TO.
SURE, IF YOU TAKE A CHANCE, YOU MIGHT GET HURT. IN A WAY YOU HAVEN'T BEFORE. AND THAT COULD BE HORRIBLE.
BUT YOU MIGHT ALSO BE HAPPY. AND DON'T YOU DESERVE A SHOT AT THAT?

I...
I DON'T KNOW IF I DO.
I'VE DONE THINGS--HURT PEOPLE--

HELLO? *I KNOW!*
YOU'VE TURNED ME INVISIBLE, FRAMED ME FOR MURDER, SUMMONED A DEMON TO POISON ME, AND PUT MY MIND IN A ROBOT BODY! JUST FOR STARTERS!

AND I SAY YOU DESERVE A SHOT AT HAPPINESS. *SO TAKE IT!*
YES, MISTRESS.

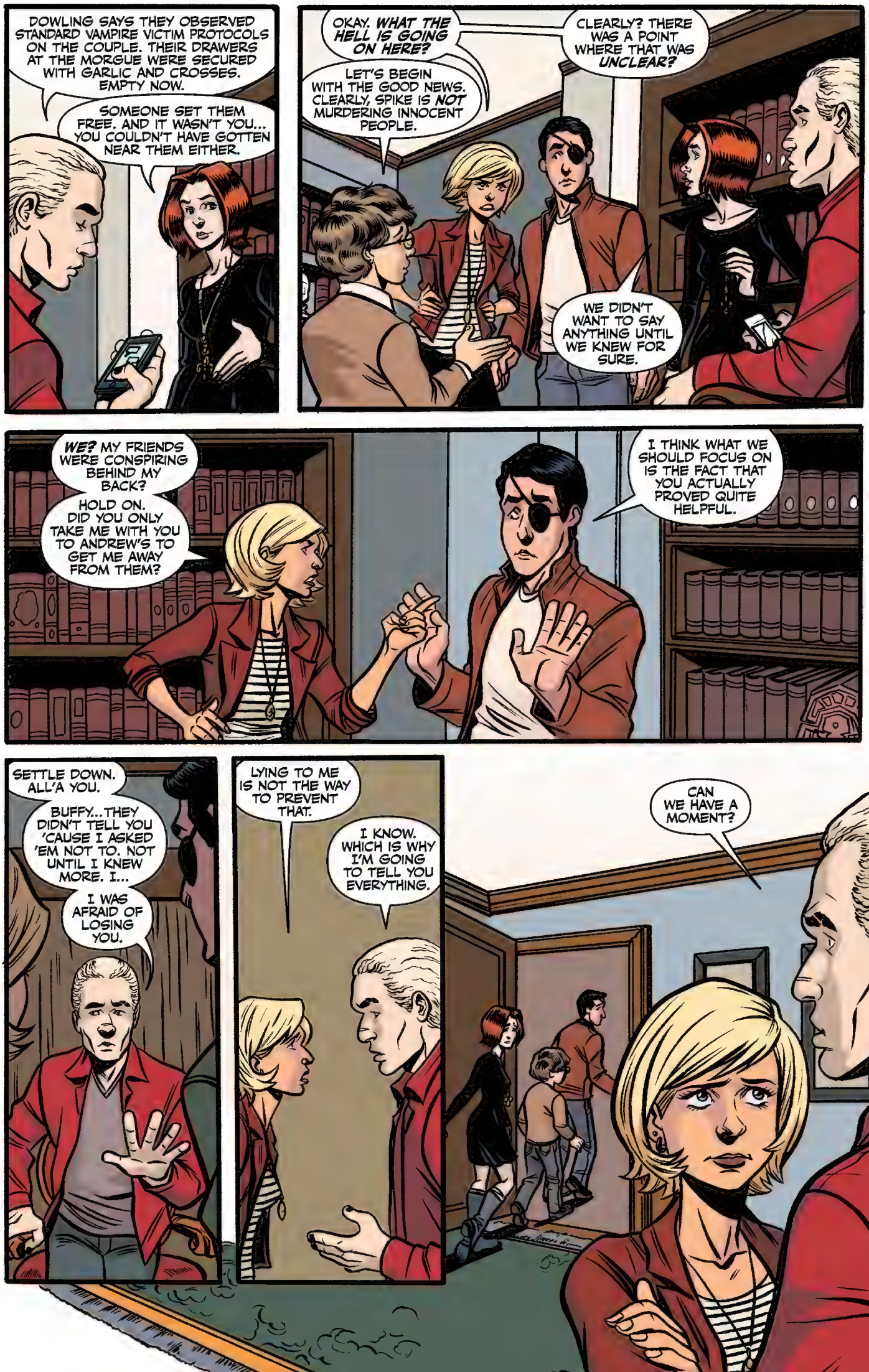

THAT DIDN'T TURN YOU ON?
MORE GAVE ME COSPLAY IDEAS.
YOU'RE DEFINITELY GAY.

SAN FRANCISCO.
GGNNAAA!
OH, MAN... OKAY, I THINK WE'VE ELIMINATED EVERYTHING.
THERE'S THE BRAIN VENOM OF THE ARABIAN COCKATRICE...
HGGAAA!
THEY'VE BEEN EXTINCT FOR CENTURIES!
I KNOW, BUT WE WANT TO COVER ALL POSSIBILITIES!
WE KEEP THIS UP AND WE'LL KILL HIM!
Y-YOU'LL HAVE TO... ANYWAY...IF THIS GOES THE WAY IT'S LOOKING.
THAT NO ONE... AND NOTHING... IS MAKING ME KILL.
TH-THAT I'M DOIN' IT...'CAUSE PART OF ME... WANTS TO.
THERE'S ONE THING WE HAVEN'T TRIED. YOU SAID YOU HAD THESE VISIONS WHEN YOU WERE ASLEEP, RIGHT?
GILES...START THE SOMNOLENCE INCANTATION.

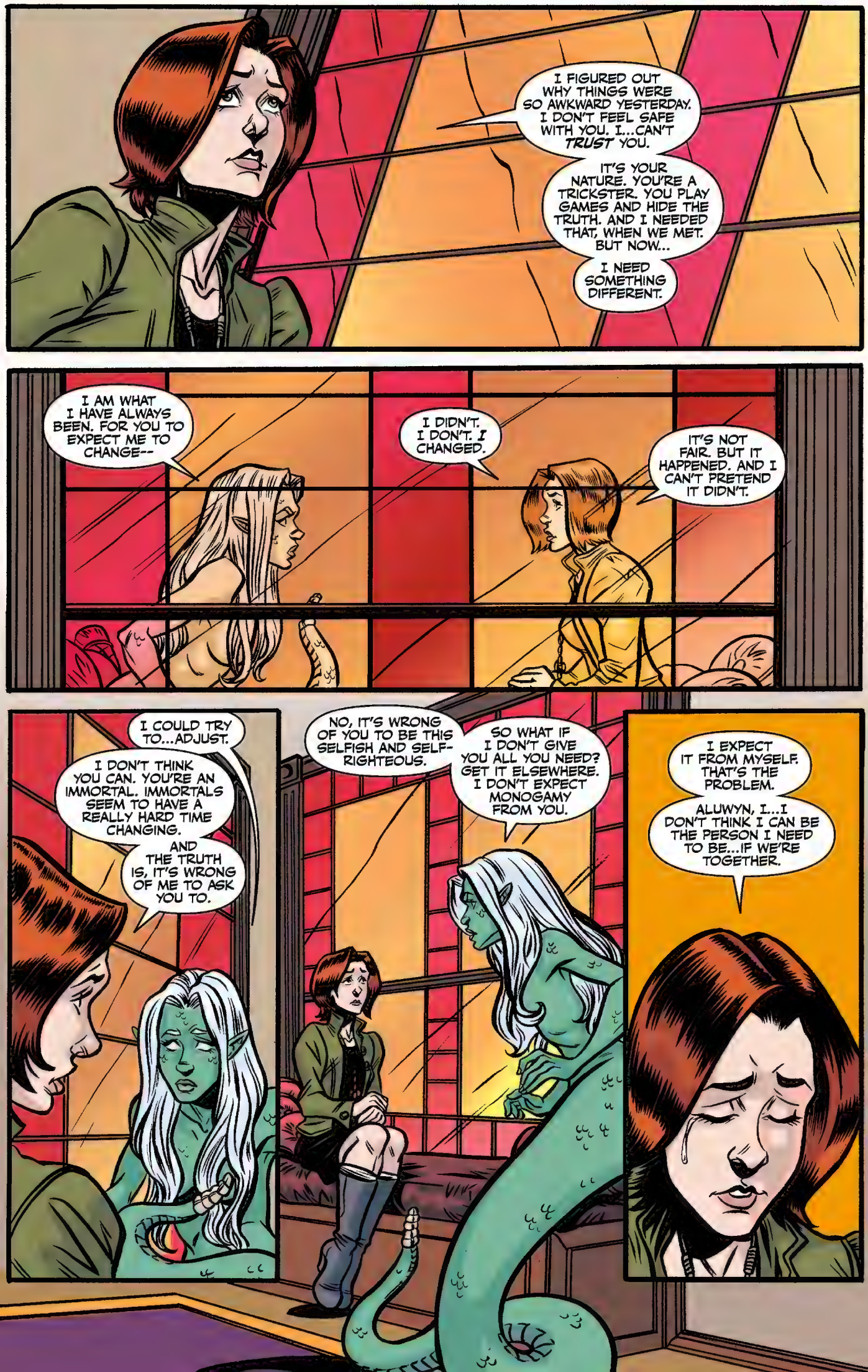
YOU THINK ANDREW'LL BE OKAY? MAYBE I SHOULD'VE TOLD HIM ABOUT ALL THE APPS AVAILABLE FOR THE DATING GAY MAN. THEY'RE VERY SPECIALIZED.
THERE'S ONE JUST FOR "BEARS," WHICH IS BIG, HAIRY GUYS. "OTTERS" ARE HAIRY, THIN DUDES. ANDREW'S MORE OF A "PUP." THAT'S--
XANDER, I HAVE THE INTERNET TOO, OKAY? HE'LL BE FINE. HE JUST NEEDS TIME TO FIGURE THINGS OUT. LIKE ALL OF US.
BZZT BZZT
GILES? YEAH, WE'RE NOT FAR FROM THERE. IS SOMETHING WRONG?
THERE IS THAT DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.
WE'VE HEARD...RUMORS OF A VAMPIRE NEST IN THE AREA. COULD YOU PERHAPS INVESTIGATE?
WE'RE HERE. I'M GONNA HANG UP AND ARM UP.

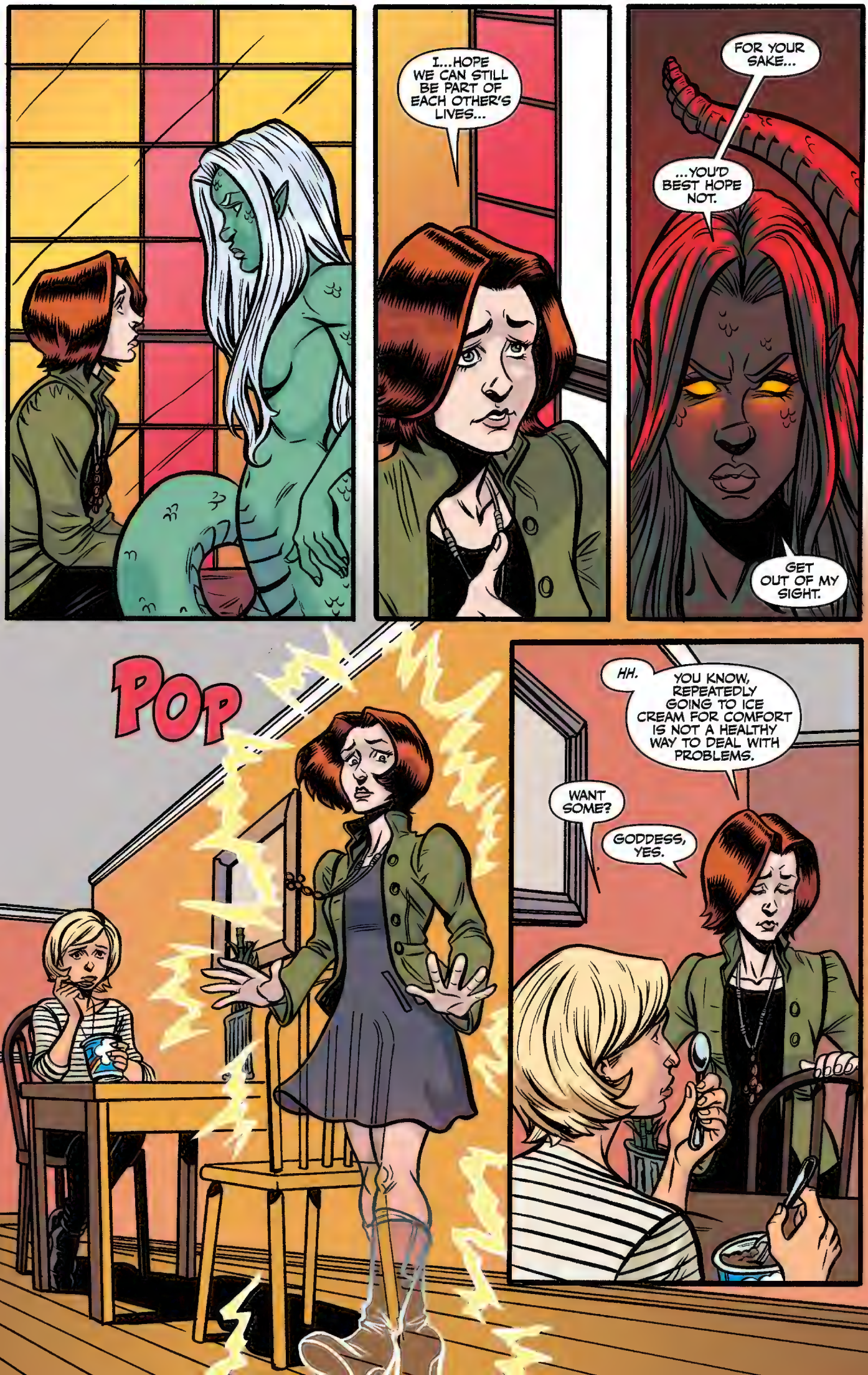
STAY BEHIND ME.
HEY, I'VE BEEN DOING THIS KIND OF THING FOR AGES. I DON'T NEED TO BE CODDLED.
GRAARR!
THEN AGAIN, CODDLE AWAY.
GAH! I HATE THESE NEW-BREED VAMPIRES!
HANG ON...
WAIT. DO YOU SMELL SOMETHING BURNING?
FWOOOSH
THIS IS INCONVENIENT.

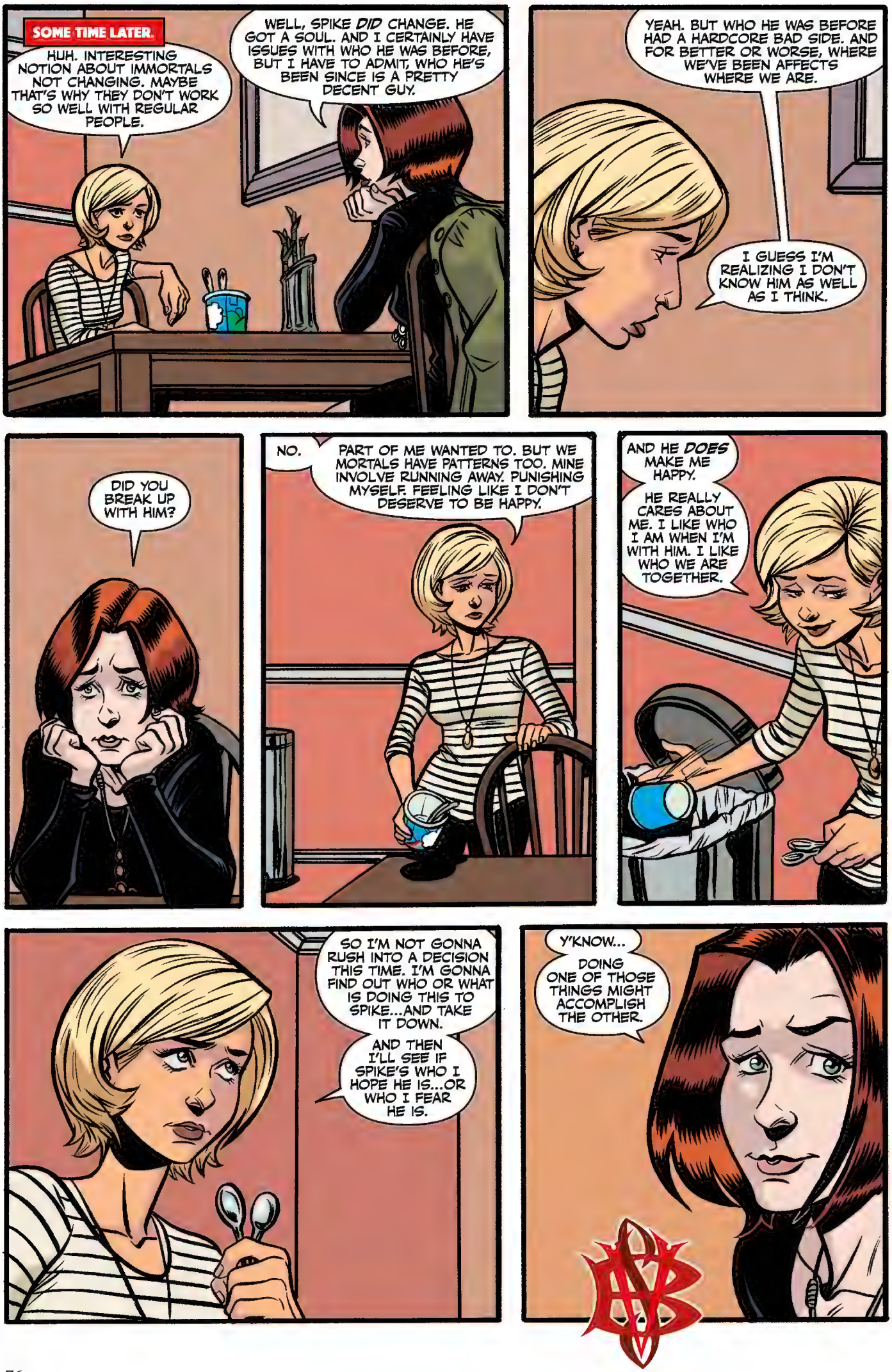
IT HAS ITS PLUSES.
FWASH
PAFT
I THINK THE MINUSES WIN.
YEAH. YOU WANT ME TO PICK YOU UP?
YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE FIREMAN'S CARRY?
CRASH
THAT WAS NO NEST. THAT WAS A TRAP, WITH UNDEAD BAIT.
THERE'S... SOMETHING I PROBABLY SHOULD'VE MENTIONED BEFORE...

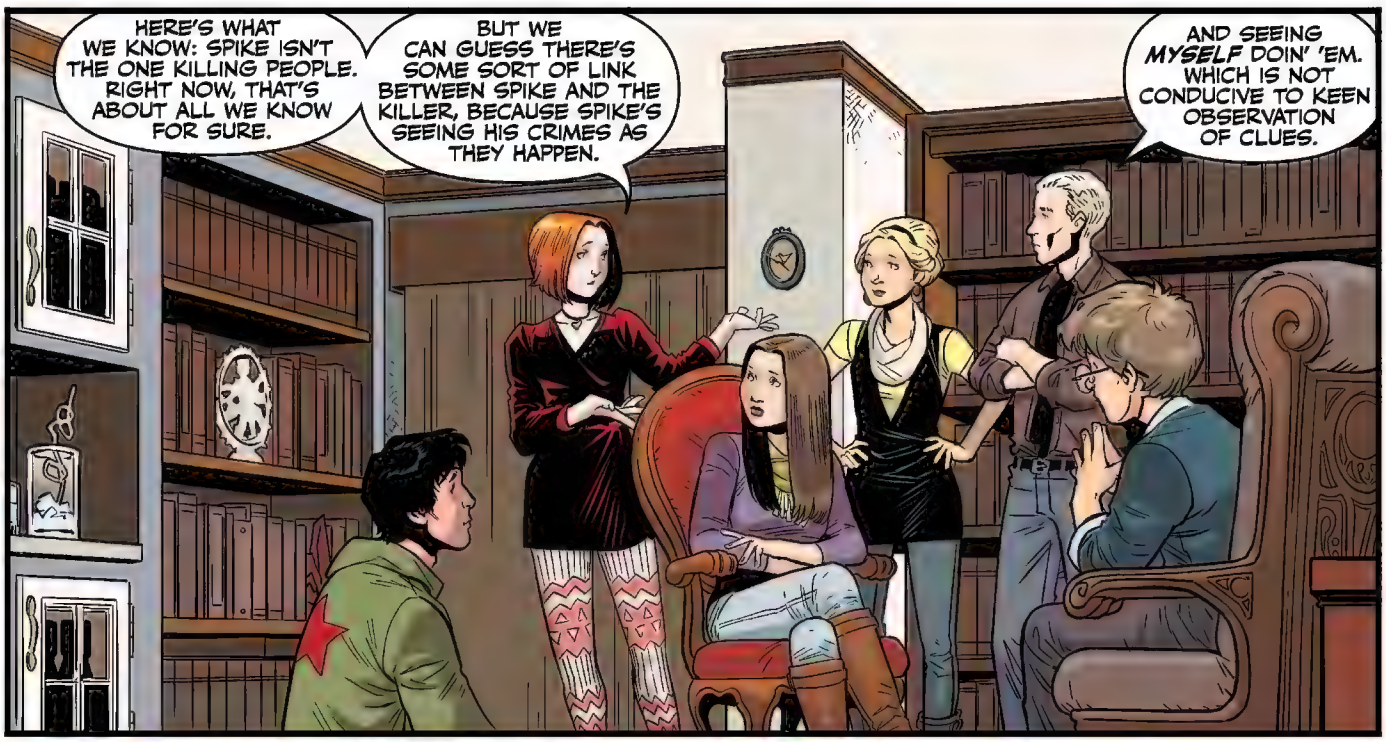

DOWLING SAYS THEY OBSERVED STANDARD VAMPIRE VICTIM PROTOCOLS ON THE COUPLE. THEIR DRAWERS AT THE MORGUE WERE SECURED WITH GARLIC AND CROSSES. EMPTY NOW.
SOMEONE SET THEM FREE. AND IT WASN'T YOU... YOU COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN NEAR THEM EITHER.
OKAY. WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?
LET'S BEGIN WITH THE GOOD NEWS. CLEARLY, SPIKE IS NOT MURDERING INNOCENT PEOPLE.
CLEARLY? THERE WAS A POINT WHERE THAT WAS UNCLEAR?
WE DIDN'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING UNTIL WE KNEW FOR SURE.
WE? MY FRIENDS WERE CONSPIRING BEHIND MY BACK?
HOLD ON. DID YOU ONLY TAKE ME WITH YOU TO ANDREW'S TO GET ME AWAY FROM THEM?
I THINK WHAT WE SHOULD FOCUS ON IS THE FACT THAT YOU ACTUALLY PROVED QUITE HELPFUL.
SETTLE DOWN. ALL'A YOU.
BUFFY...THEY DIDN'T TELL YOU 'CAUSE I ASKED 'EM NOT TO. NOT UNTIL I KNEW MORE. I...
I WAS AFRAID OF LOSING YOU.
LYING TO ME IS NOT THE WAY TO PREVENT THAT.
I KNOW. WHICH IS WHY I'M GOING TO TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
CAN WE HAVE A MOMENT?

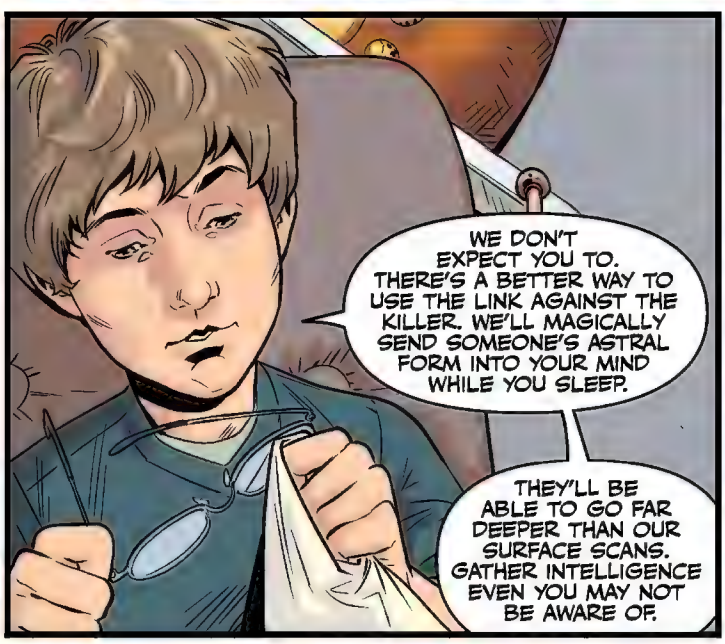
I FIND MYSELF FEELING QUITE SORRY FOR HIM. IT'S NOT AS IF WE HAVE MANY MORE ANSWERS THAN WE DID THIS MORNING.
YEAH, BUT TELLING HER IS THE WAY TO GO. TRUST ME.
KEEPING SECRETS DOESN'T LEAD ANYWHERE GOOD.
HEY. WHY'S EVERYONE IN THE HALL? DON'T TELL ME SPIKE AND BUFFY ARE GOING AT IT AGAIN.
LET ME GET YOU UP TO SPEED, WISE SCHOLAR.
WILLOW, PERHAPS WE SHOULD CONSULT--
IN A LITTLE BIT, OKAY? THERE'S... SOMETHING I HAVE TO DO, TOO.
ALUWYN...
...WE HAVE TO BREAK UP.


I FIGURED OUT WHY THINGS WERE SO AWKWARD YESTERDAY. I DON'T FEEL SAFE WITH YOU. I...CAN'T *TRUST* YOU.
IT'S YOUR NATURE. YOU'RE A TRICKSTER. YOU PLAY GAMES AND HIDE THE TRUTH. AND I NEEDED THAT, WHEN WE MET. BUT NOW...
I NEED SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
I AM WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN. FOR YOU TO EXPECT ME TO CHANGE--
I DIDN'T. I DON'T. *I* CHANGED.
IT'S NOT FAIR. BUT IT HAPPENED. AND I CAN'T PRETEND IT DIDN'T.
I COULD TRY TO...ADJUST.
I DON'T THINK YOU CAN. YOU'RE AN IMMORTAL. IMMORTALS SEEM TO HAVE A REALLY HARD TIME CHANGING.
AND THE TRUTH IS, IT'S WRONG OF ME TO ASK YOU TO.
NO, IT'S WRONG OF YOU TO BE THIS SELFISH AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS.
SO WHAT IF I DON'T GIVE YOU ALL YOU NEED? GET IT ELSEWHERE. I DON'T EXPECT MONOGAMY FROM YOU.
I EXPECT IT FROM MYSELF. THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
ALUWYN, I...I DON'T THINK I CAN BE THE PERSON I NEED TO BE...IF WE'RE TOGETHER.


I...HOPE WE CAN STILL BE PART OF EACH OTHER'S LIVES...
FOR YOUR SAKE...
...YOU'D BEST HOPE NOT.
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT.
POP
HH.
YOU KNOW, REPEATEDLY GOING TO ICE CREAM FOR COMFORT IS NOT A HEALTHY WAY TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS.
WANT SOME?
GODDESS, YES.

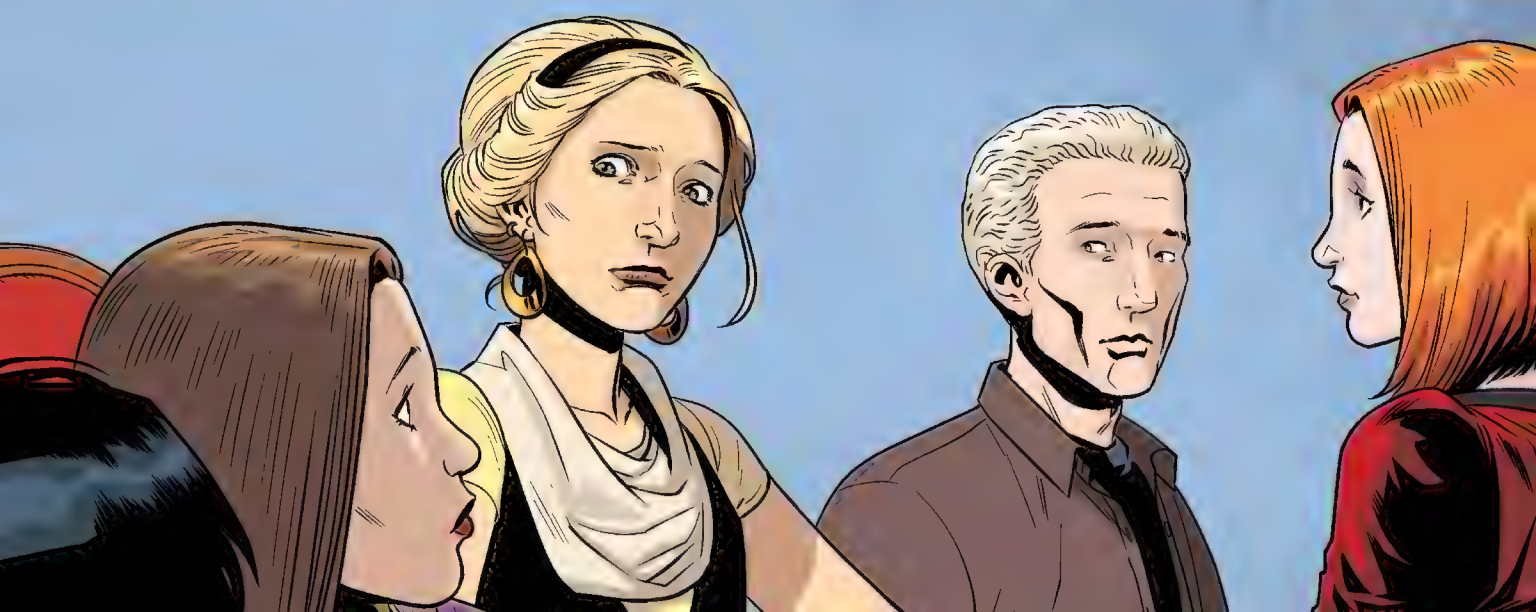

SOME TIME LATER.
HUH. INTERESTING NOTION ABOUT IMMORTALS NOT CHANGING. MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY DON'T WORK SO WELL WITH REGULAR PEOPLE.
WELL, SPIKE *DID* CHANGE. HE GOT A SOUL. AND I CERTAINLY HAVE ISSUES WITH WHO HE WAS BEFORE, BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT, WHO HE'S BEEN SINCE IS A PRETTY DECENT GUY.
YEAH. BUT WHO HE WAS BEFORE HAD A HARDCORE BAD SIDE. AND FOR BETTER OR WORSE, WHERE WE'VE BEEN AFFECTS WHERE WE ARE.
I GUESS I'M REALIZING I DON'T KNOW HIM AS WELL AS I THINK.
DID YOU BREAK UP WITH HIM?
NO.
PART OF ME WANTED TO. BUT WE MORTALS HAVE PATTERNS TOO. MINE INVOLVE RUNNING AWAY. PUNISHING MYSELF. FEELING LIKE I DON'T DESERVE TO BE HAPPY.
AND HE *DOES* MAKE ME HAPPY.
HE REALLY CARES ABOUT ME. I LIKE WHO I AM WHEN I'M WITH HIM. I LIKE WHO WE ARE TOGETHER.
SO I'M NOT GONNA RUSH INTO A DECISION THIS TIME. I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHO OR WHAT IS DOING THIS TO SPIKE...AND TAKE IT DOWN.
AND THEN I'LL SEE IF SPIKE'S WHO I HOPE HE IS...OR WHO I FEAR HE IS.
Y'KNOW...
DOING ONE OF THOSE THINGS MIGHT ACCOMPLISH THE OTHER.

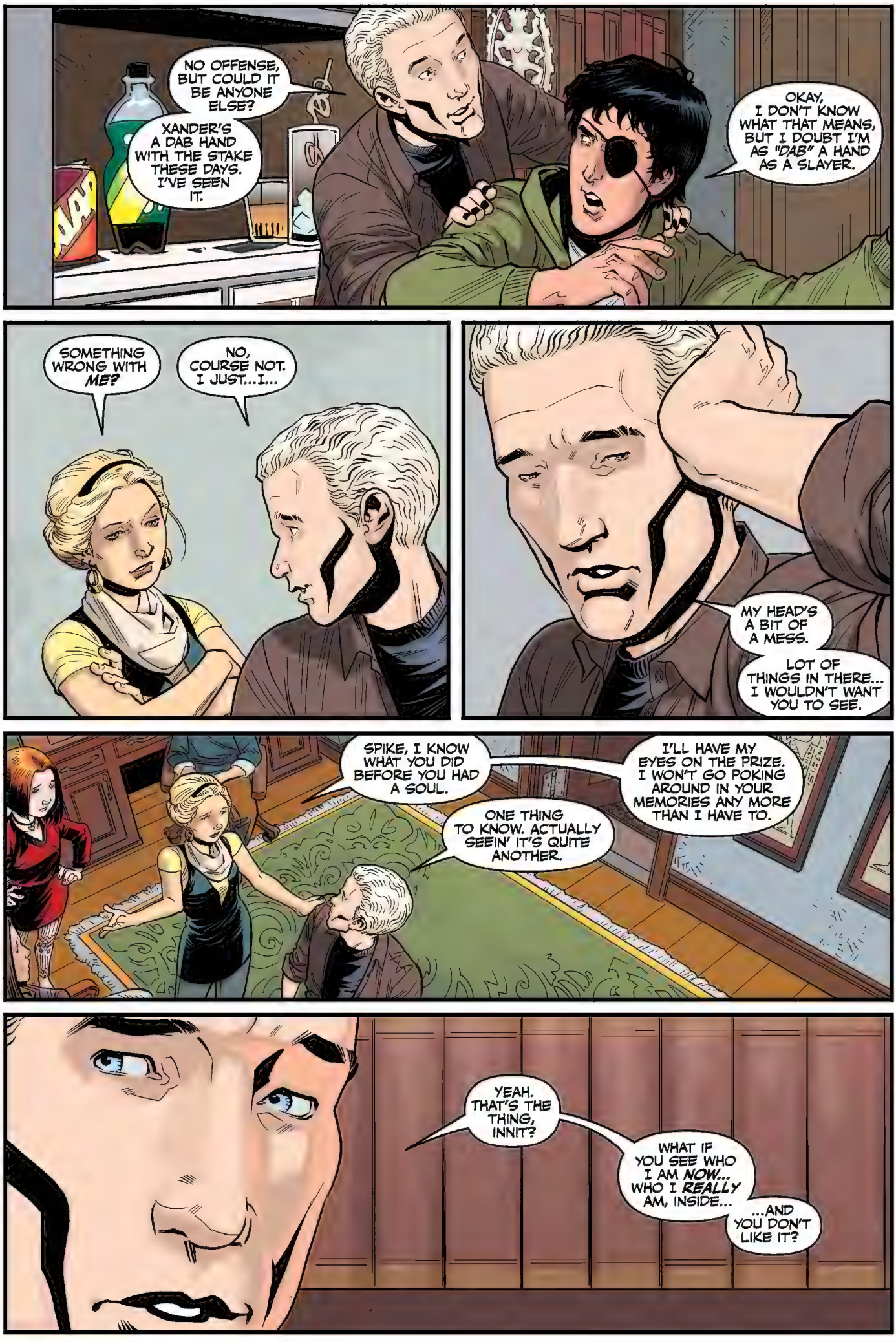


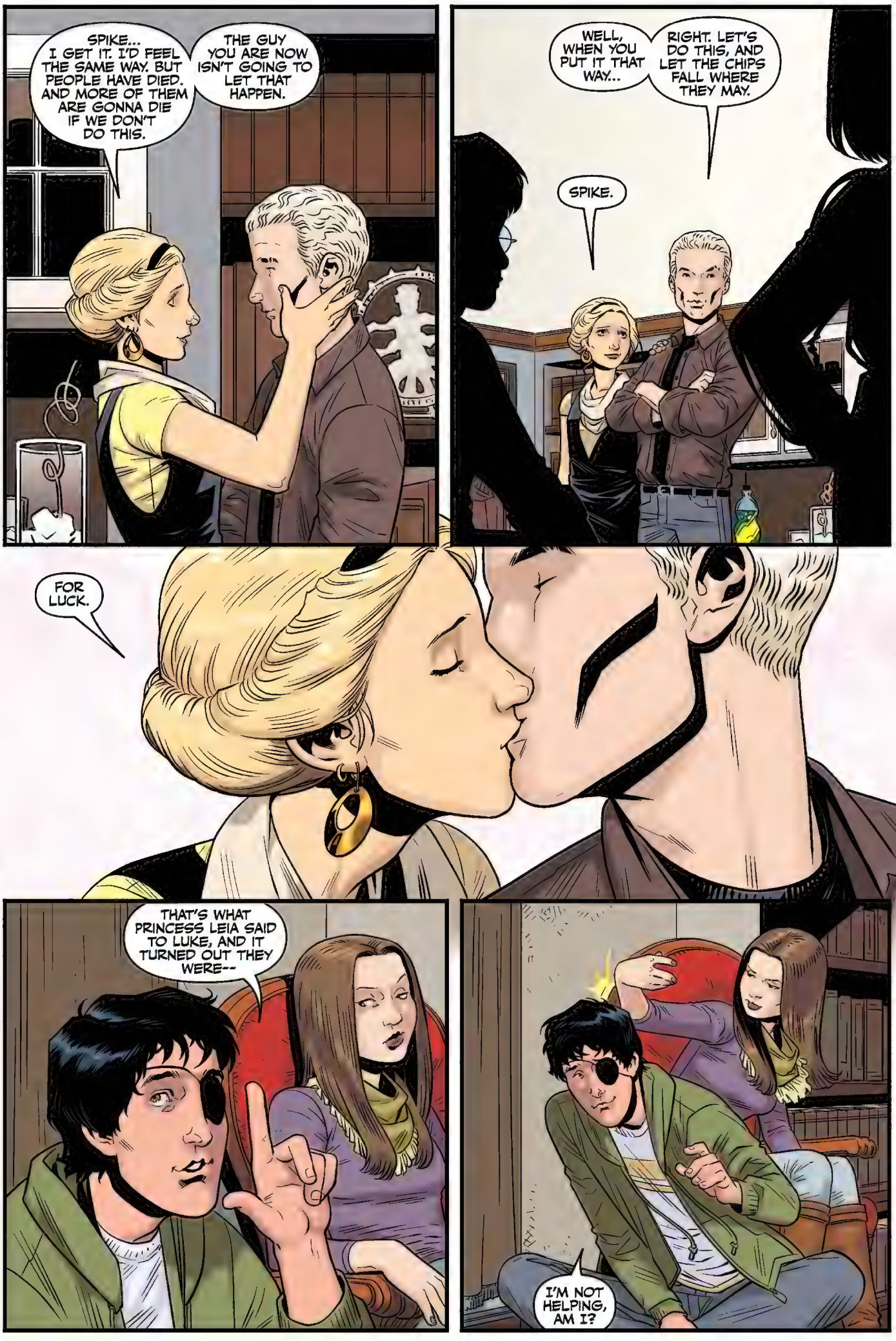


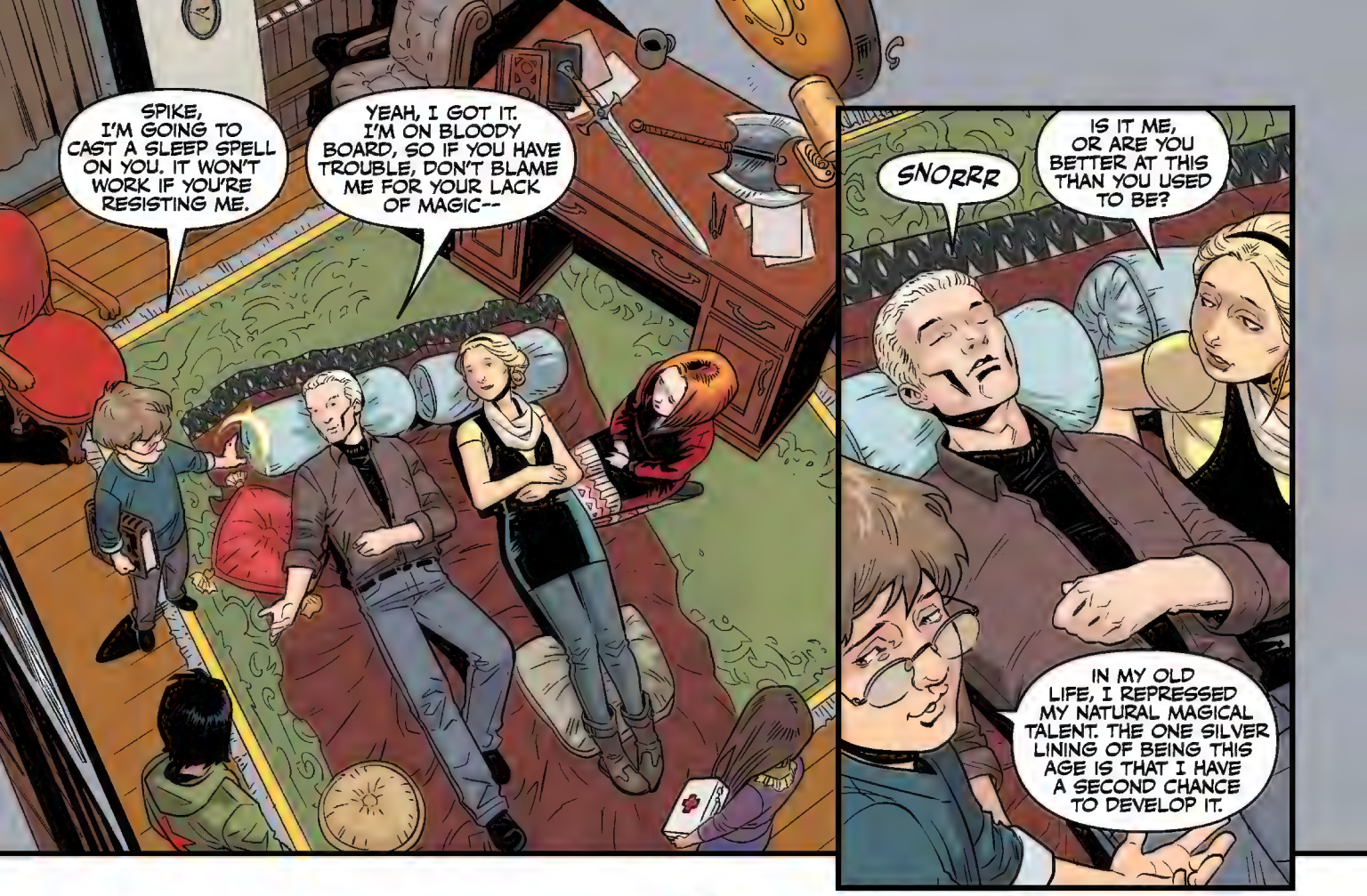
RELATIONSHIP STATUS: COMPLICATED

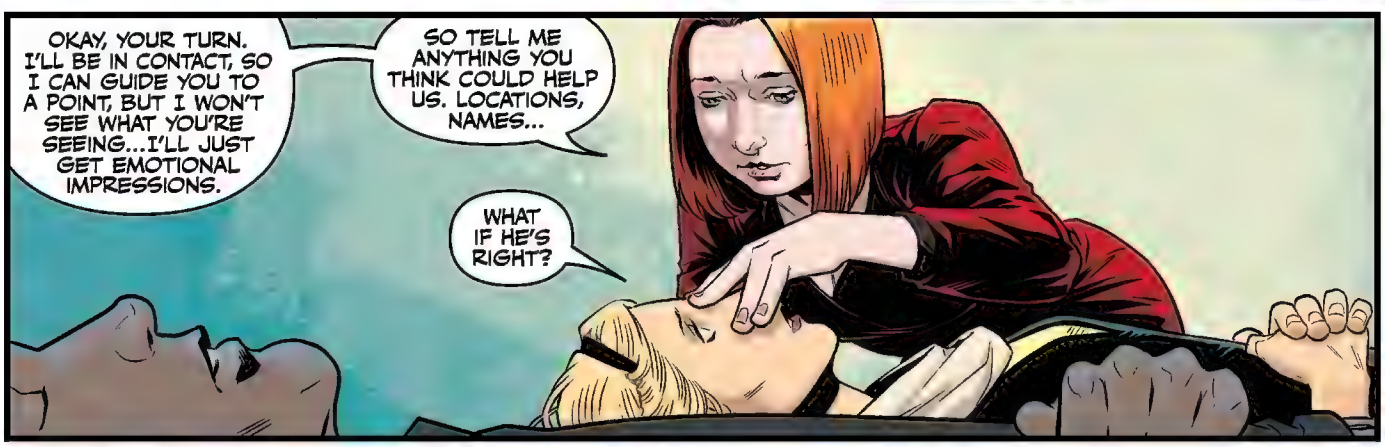
PART ONE

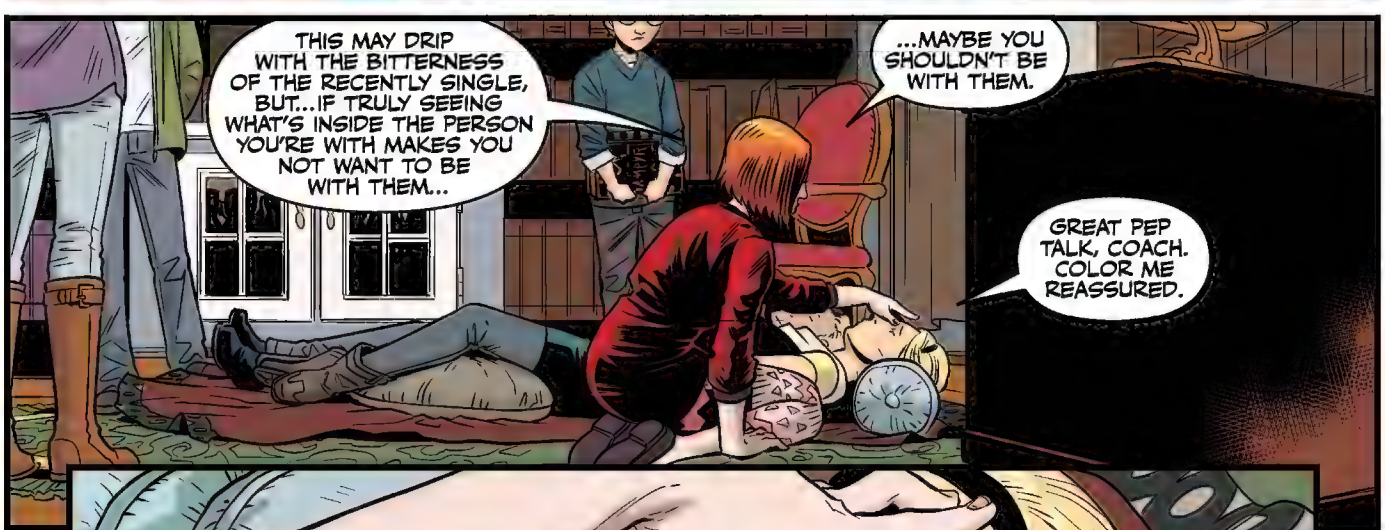


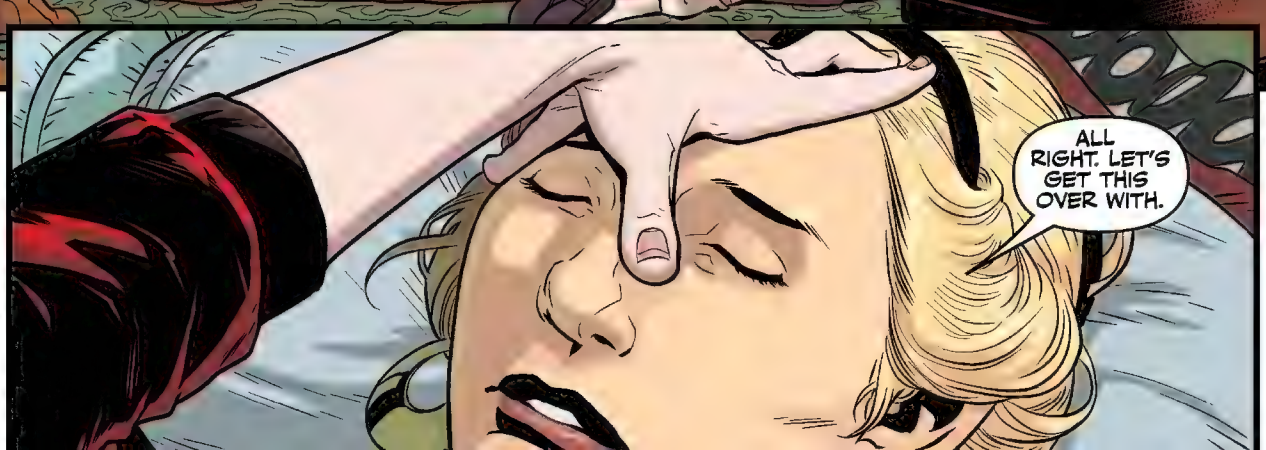

NO OFFENSE, BUT COULD IT BE ANYONE ELSE?
XANDER'S A DAB HAND WITH THE STAKE THESE DAYS. I'VE SEEN IT.
OKAY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, BUT I DOUBT I'M AS "DAB" A HAND AS A SLAYER.
SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME?
NO, COURSE NOT. I JUST...I...
MY HEAD'S A BIT OF A MESS.
LOT OF THINGS IN THERE... I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE.
SPIKE, I KNOW WHAT YOU DID BEFORE YOU HAD A SOUL.
ONE THING TO KNOW. ACTUALLY SEEIN' IT'S QUITE ANOTHER.
I'LL HAVE MY EYES ON THE PRIZE. I WON'T GO POKING AROUND IN YOUR MEMORIES ANY MORE THAN I HAVE TO.
YEAH. THAT'S THE THING, INNIT?
WHAT IF YOU SEE WHO I AM NOW... WHO I REALLY AM, INSIDE...
...AND YOU DON'T LIKE IT?

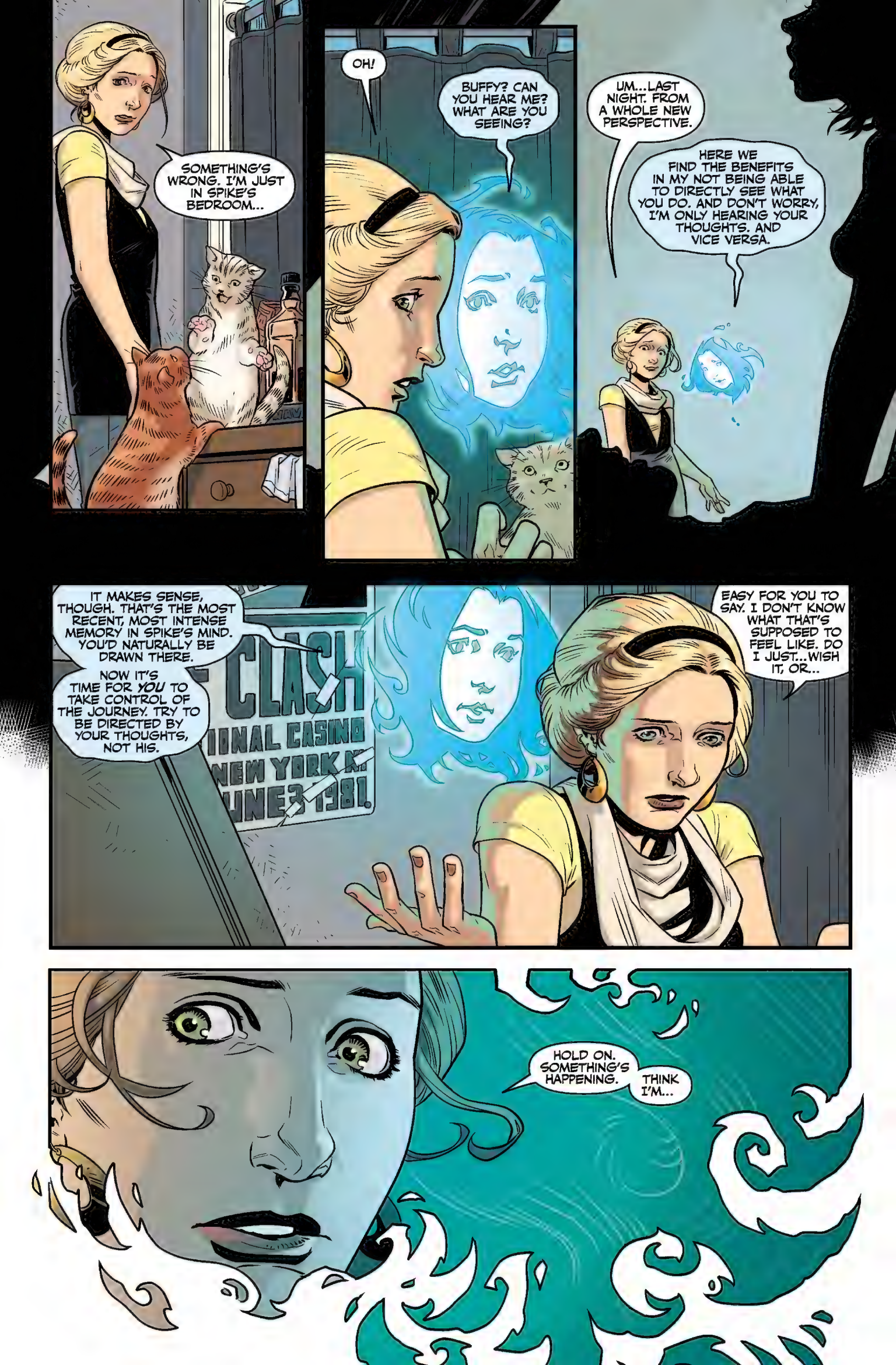

SPIKE... I GET IT. I'D FEEL THE SAME WAY. BUT PEOPLE HAVE DIED. AND MORE OF THEM ARE GONNA DIE IF WE DON'T DO THIS.
THE GUY YOU ARE NOW ISN'T GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN.
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
RIGHT. LET'S DO THIS, AND LET THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY.
SPIKE.
FOR LUCK.
THAT'S WHAT PRINCESS LEIA SAID TO LUKE, AND IT TURNED OUT THEY WERE--
I'M NOT HELPING, AM I?


SPIKE, I'M GOING TO CAST A SLEEP SPELL ON YOU. IT WON'T WORK IF YOU'RE RESISTING ME.
YEAH, I GOT IT. I'M ON BLOODY BOARD, SO IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE, DON'T BLAME ME FOR YOUR LACK OF MAGIC--
SNORRR
IS IT ME, OR ARE YOU BETTER AT THIS THAN YOU USED TO BE?
IN MY OLD LIFE, I REPRESSED MY NATURAL MAGICAL TALENT. THE ONE SILVER LINING OF BEING THIS AGE IS THAT I HAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO DEVELOP IT.

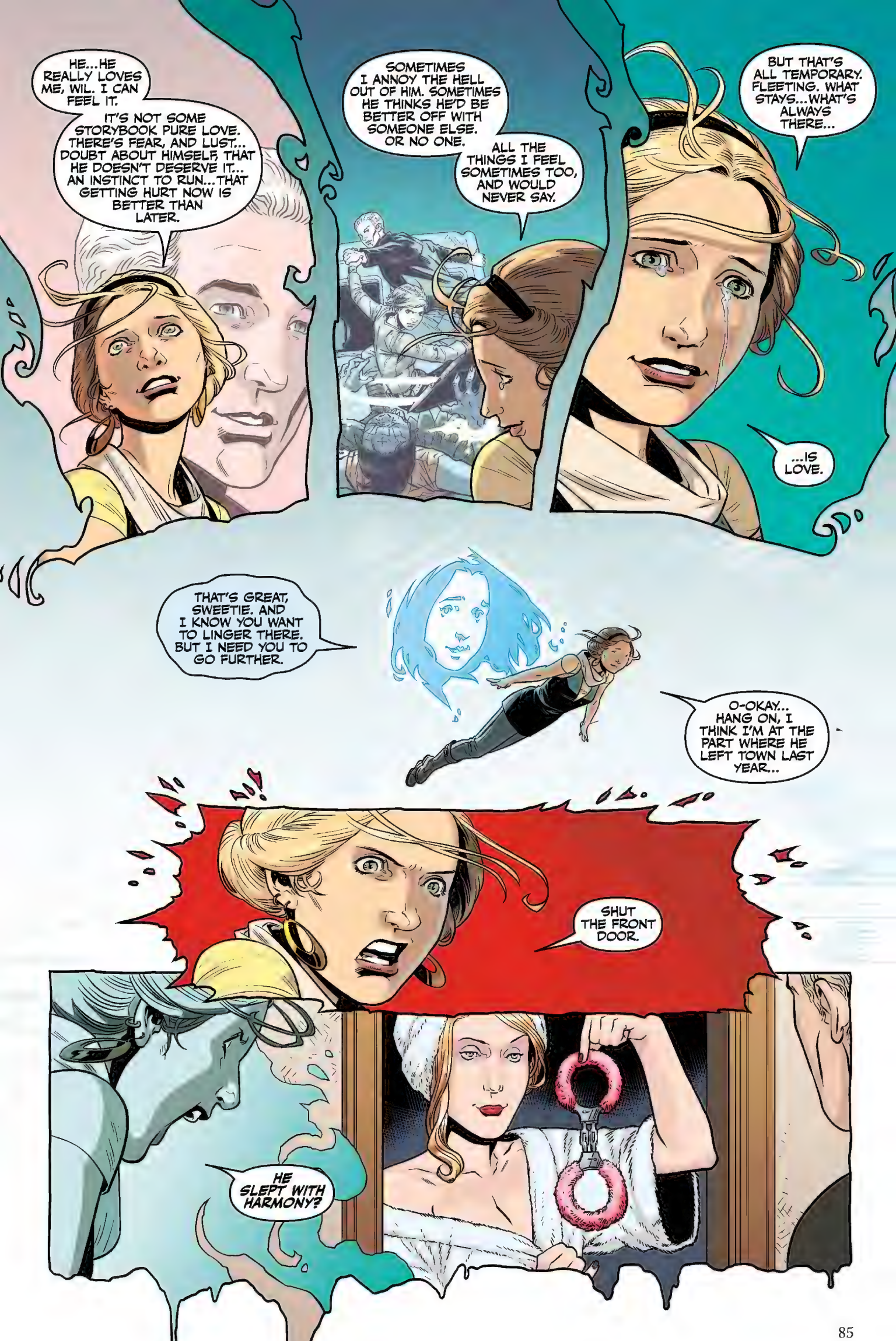

OKAY, YOUR TURN. I'LL BE IN CONTACT, SO I CAN GUIDE YOU TO A POINT, BUT I WON'T SEE WHAT YOU'RE SEEING...I'LL JUST GET EMOTIONAL IMPRESSIONS.
SO TELL ME ANYTHING YOU THINK COULD HELP US. LOCATIONS, NAMES...
WHAT IF HE'S RIGHT?


THIS MAY DRIP WITH THE BITTERNESS OF THE RECENTLY SINGLE, BUT...IF TRULY SEEING WHAT'S INSIDE THE PERSON YOU'RE WITH MAKES YOU NOT WANT TO BE WITH THEM...
...MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T BE WITH THEM.
GREAT PEP TALK, COACH. COLOR ME REASSURED.

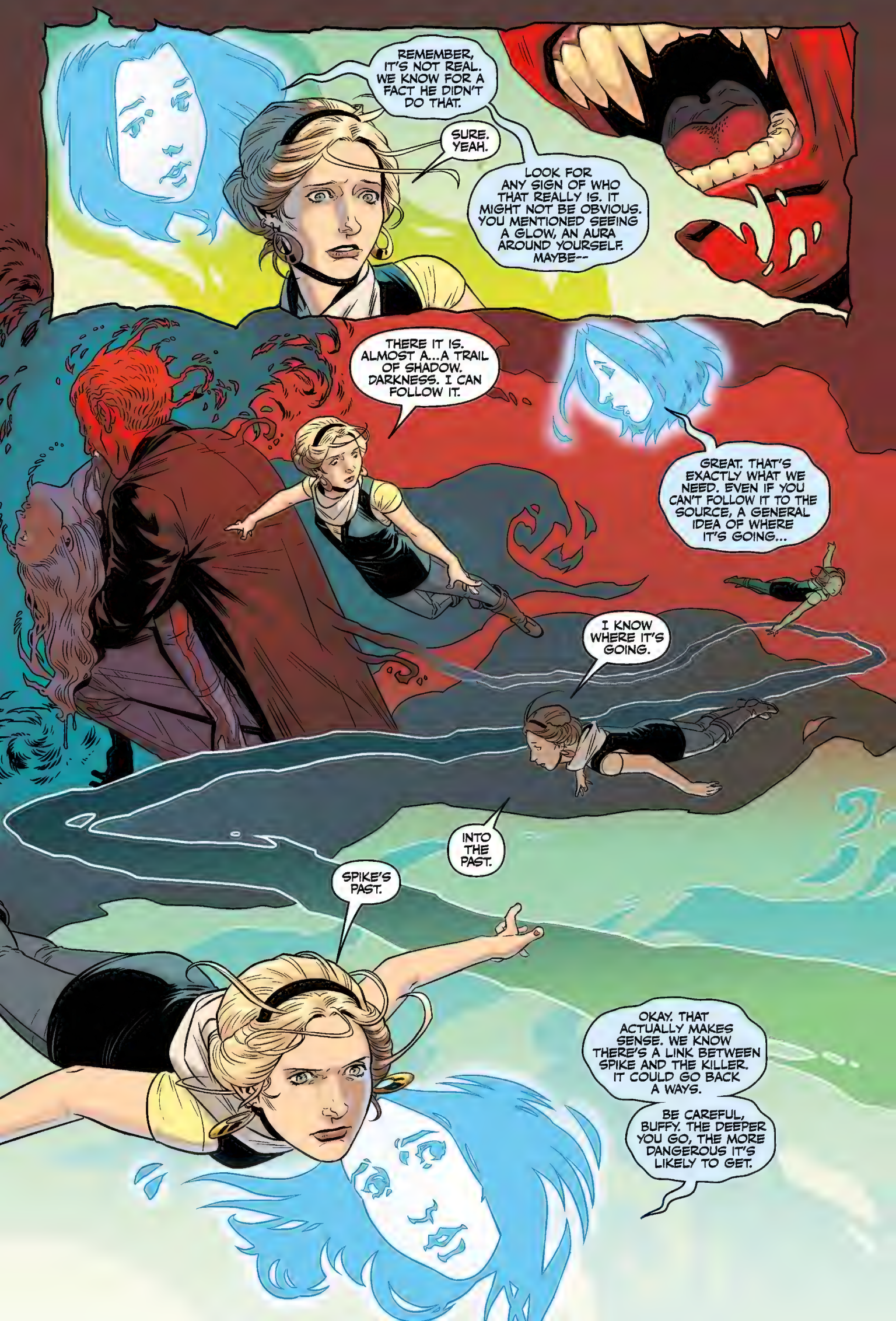

ALL RIGHT. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.


SOMETHING'S WRONG. I'M JUST IN SPIKE'S BEDROOM...
OH!
BUFFY? CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHAT ARE YOU SEEING?
UM...LAST NIGHT. FROM A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE.
HERE WE FIND THE BENEFITS IN MY NOT BEING ABLE TO DIRECTLY SEE WHAT YOU DO. AND DON'T WORRY, I'M ONLY HEARING YOUR THOUGHTS. AND VICE VERSA.
IT MAKES SENSE, THOUGH. THAT'S THE MOST RECENT, MOST INTENSE MEMORY IN SPIKE'S MIND. YOU'D NATURALLY BE DRAWN THERE.
NOW IT'S TIME FOR *YOU* TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE JOURNEY. TRY TO BE DIRECTED BY YOUR THOUGHTS, NOT HIS.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT'S SUPPOSED TO FEEL LIKE. DO I JUST...WISH IT, OR...
HOLD ON. SOMETHING'S HAPPENING.
I THINK I'M...

OH.
OH, WOW.
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
KIND OF.. EVERYTHING.
I MEAN, RECENT STUFF. BUT THINGS I WASN'T THERE FOR. AND I... I'M GETTING IMPRESSIONS OF HOW HE FEELS.
ARE YOU... IS IT OKAY?


HE...HE REALLY LOVES ME, WIL. I CAN FEEL IT.
IT'S NOT SOME STORYBOOK PURE LOVE. THERE'S FEAR, AND LUST... DOUBT ABOUT HIMSELF, THAT HE DOESN'T DESERVE IT... AN INSTINCT TO RUN...THAT GETTING HURT NOW IS BETTER THAN LATER.
SOMETIMES I ANNOY THE HELL OUT OF HIM. SOMETIMES HE THINKS HE'D BE BETTER OFF WITH SOMEONE ELSE. OR NO ONE.
ALL THE THINGS I FEEL SOMETIMES TOO, AND WOULD NEVER SAY.
BUT THAT'S ALL TEMPORARY. FLEETING. WHAT STAYS...WHAT'S ALWAYS THERE...
...IS LOVE.
THAT'S GREAT, SWEETIE. AND I KNOW YOU WANT TO LINGER THERE. BUT I NEED YOU TO GO FURTHER.
O-OKAY... HANG ON, I THINK I'M AT THE PART WHERE HE LEFT TOWN LAST YEAR...
SHUT THE FRONT DOOR.
HE SLEPT WITH HARMONY?

WELL, YOU WEREN'T TOGETHER THEN, SO...
YOU DON'T SEE WHAT I DO. I MEAN, HARMONY! MUCH MORE HARMONY THAN I EVER NEEDED TO SEE!
BUFFY, LISTEN TO ME. I THINK I'M FIGURING THIS OUT...YOU'RE NOT TRAVELING THROUGH TIME; YOU'RE IN SPIKE'S MEMORIES. LOOK AT HARMONY--
I'D RATHER NOT!
AND THEN LOOK AT YOURSELF. SEE IF THERE'S A DIFFERENCE.
HE-- I--I DON'T ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE THAT. I MEAN, MAYBE ON MY BEST DAY.
AM I... GLOWING?
YOU'RE SEEING YOURSELF AS SPIKE SEES YOU. I'M GUESSING HE DOESN'T VIEW ANYONE ELSE IN QUITE THE SAME LIGHT. DOES HE?
OKAY. THANKS. SORRY I FREAKED. THIS IS ALL KIND OF.. INTENSE.
IT'S GOING TO GET MORE SO. I NEED YOU TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING SPECIFIC.
YEAH... I KNOW.
AND HERE IT IS.

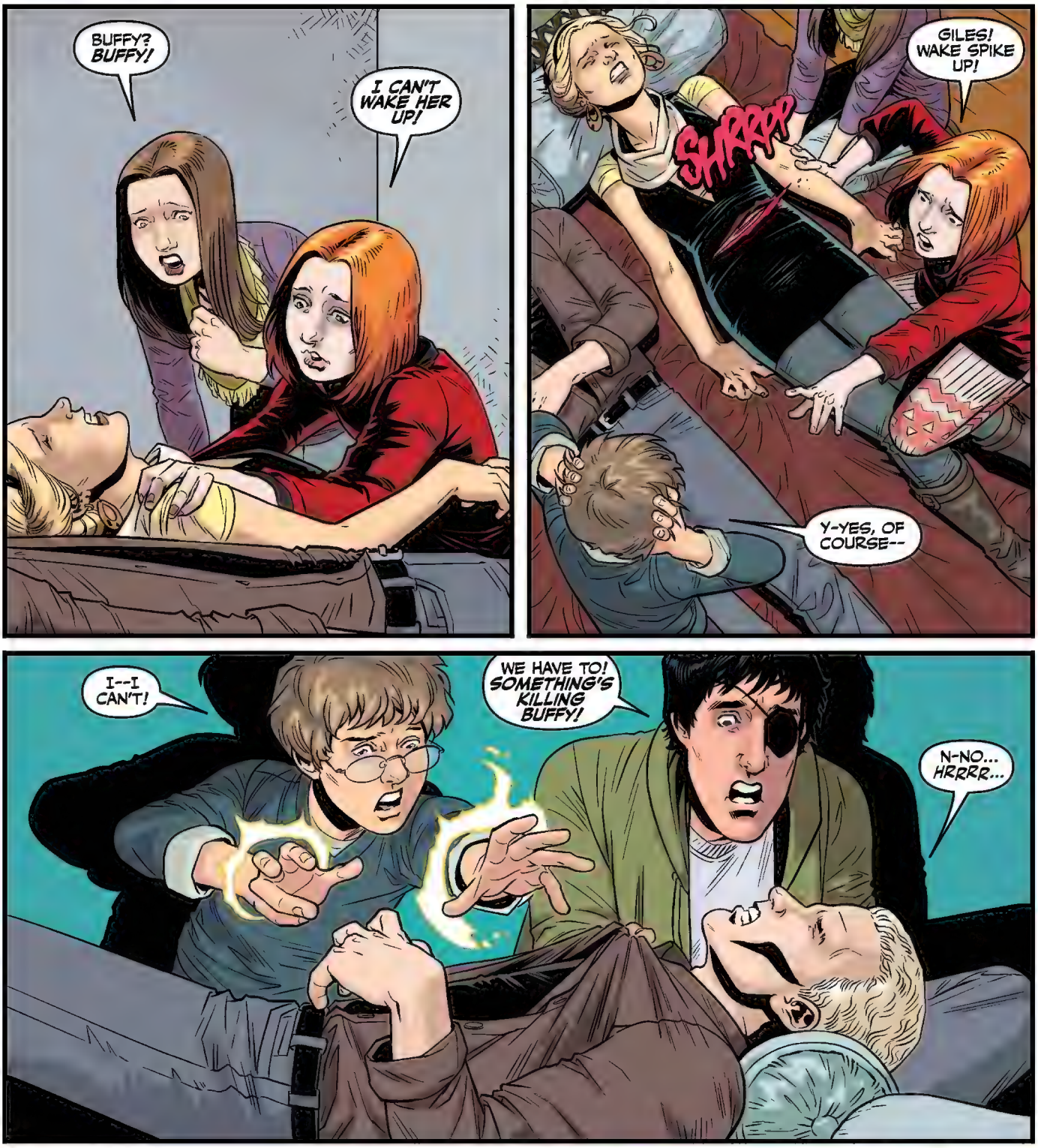

REMEMBER, IT'S NOT REAL. WE KNOW FOR A FACT HE DIDN'T DO THAT.
SURE. YEAH.
LOOK FOR ANY SIGN OF WHO THAT REALLY IS. IT MIGHT NOT BE OBVIOUS. YOU MENTIONED SEEING A GLOW, AN AURA AROUND YOURSELF. MAYBE--
THERE IT IS. ALMOST A...A TRAIL OF SHADOW. DARKNESS. I CAN FOLLOW IT.
GREAT. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE NEED. EVEN IF YOU CAN'T FOLLOW IT TO THE SOURCE, A GENERAL IDEA OF WHERE IT'S GOING...
I KNOW WHERE IT'S GOING.
INTO THE PAST.
SPIKE'S PAST.
OKAY. THAT ACTUALLY MAKES SENSE. WE KNOW THERE'S A LINK BETWEEN SPIKE AND THE KILLER. IT COULD GO BACK A WAYS.
BE CAREFUL, BUFFY. THE DEEPER YOU GO, THE MORE DANGEROUS IT'S LIKELY TO GET.

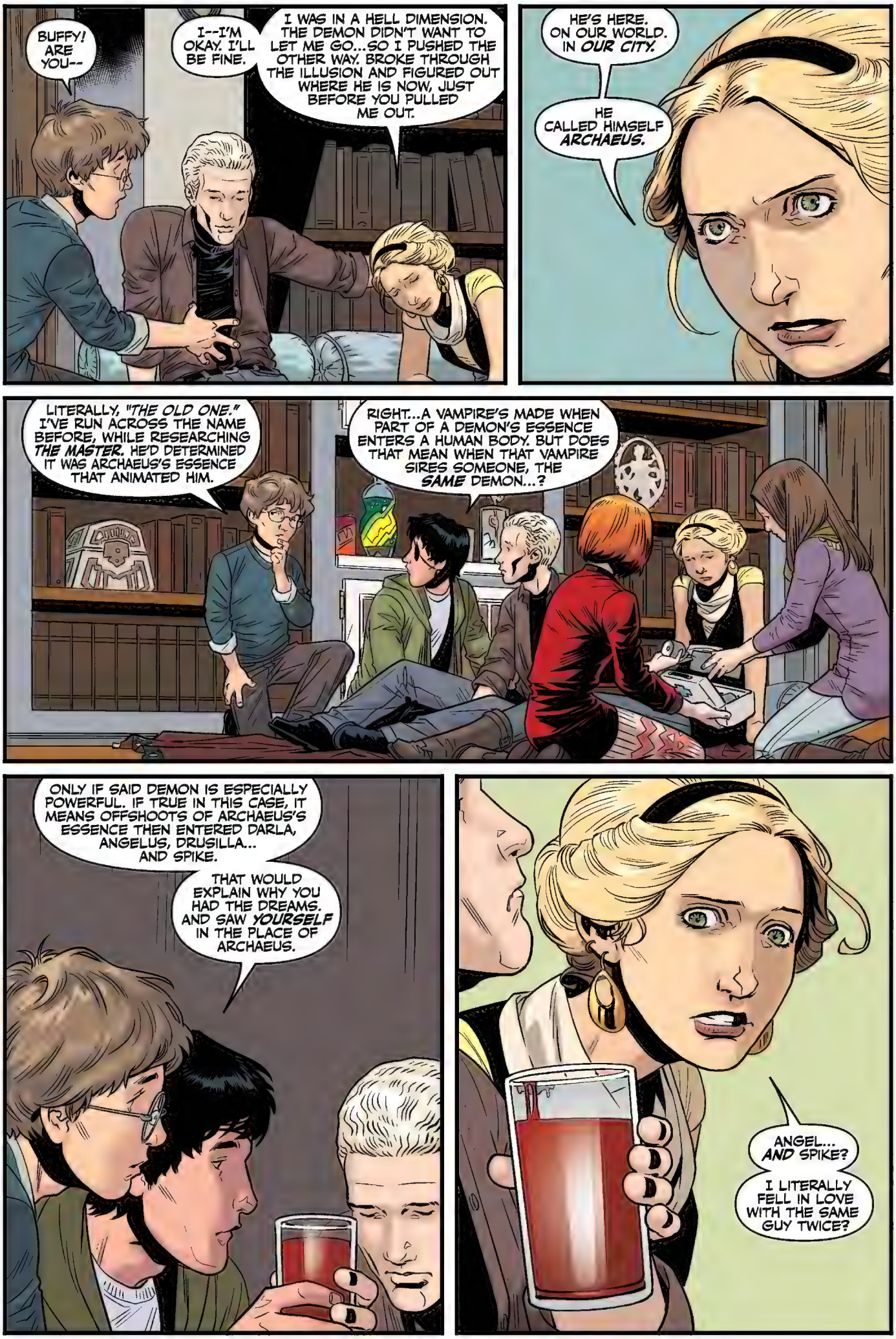
OH MY GOD. THIS IS HIM GETTING HIS SOUL BACK.
I NEVER KNEW... THE PAIN...
AND HE CHOSE IT, WILLOW. EVEN WITHOUT A SOUL, HE MADE THE CHOICE TO GO THROUGH THIS... FOR ME.
SO HIS CONNECTION TO OUR TARGET EXTENDS TO BEFORE THAT. I WAS STARTING TO FIGURE AS MUCH.
KEEP GOING, BUFFY. IF I'M RIGHT ABOUT HOW THIS WORKS, THE TRAIL SHOULD GET STRONGER FROM HERE. BUT HONEY, IT'S PROBABLY ALSO GOING TO GET...
...HARDER.
OH.

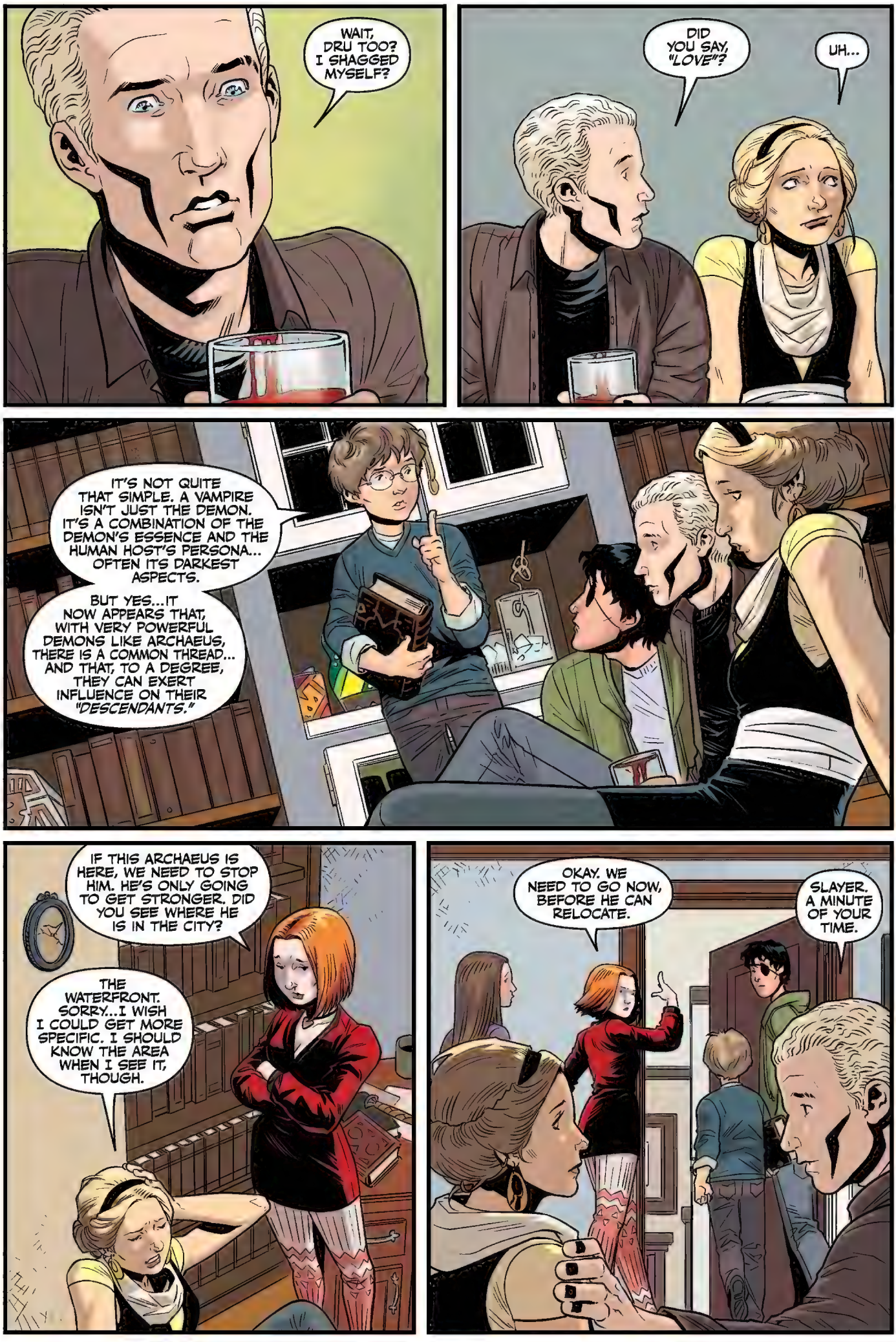
WIL, HE... HE'S KILLING THEM. AND... ENJOYING IT.
YOU KNEW THIS WAS COMING.
I KNOW...
IT'S NOT HIM. NOT THE WAY HE IS NOW.
I KNOW.
I'M FINE, WIL. LASER FOCUSED ON THE TARGET.
JUST IGNORING EVERYTHING ELSE.
THINK WE MIGHT'VE HIT A DEAD END. I'M GETTING TO THE MOMENT WHERE DRUSILLA SIRED HIM, AND THE TRAIL SEEMS TO--
WWAAAAHH!

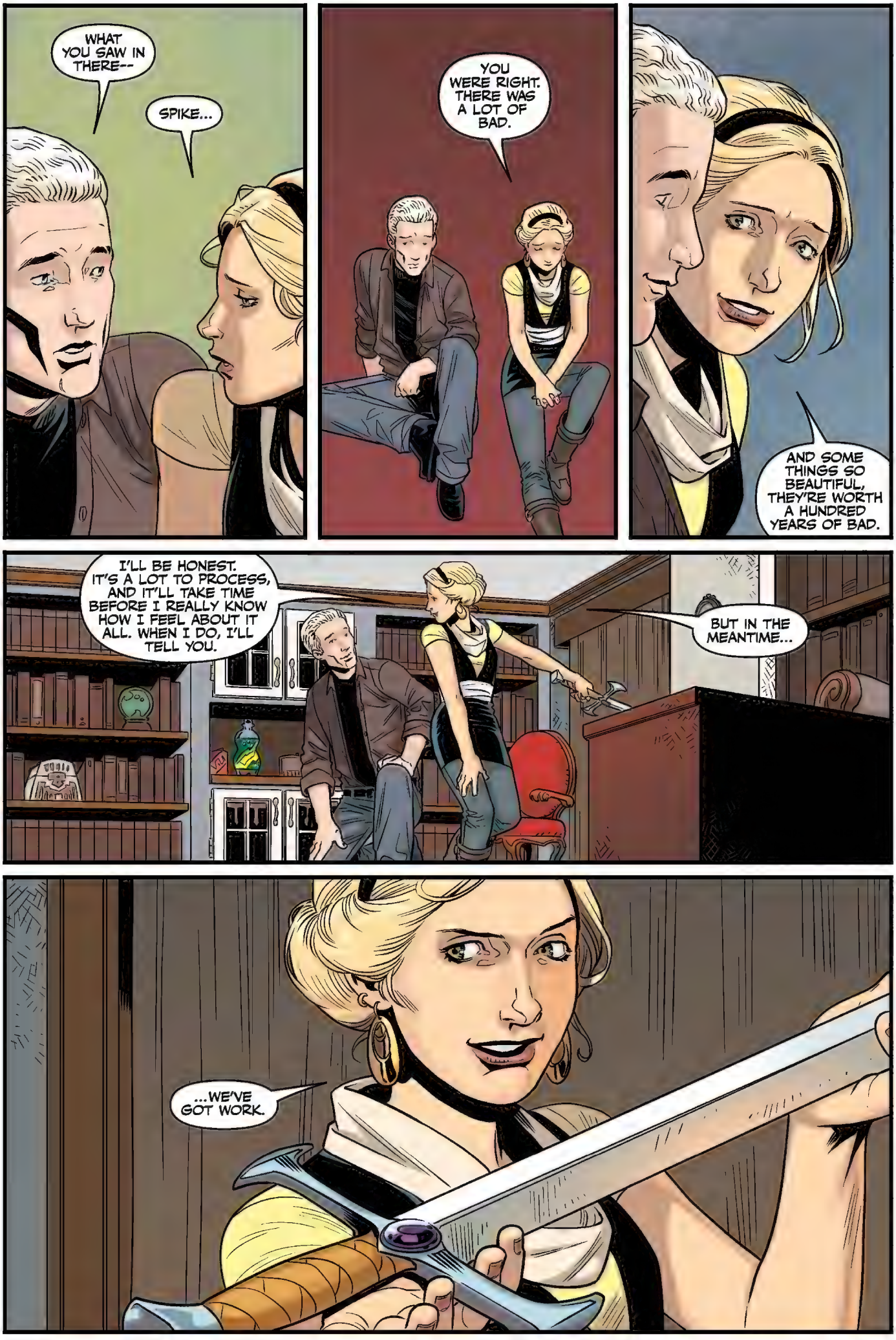
WILLOW! WHAT'S HAPPENING? ALL I CAN SEE NOW IS DRUSILLA!
THE SHADOW YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING-- IT'S GOT TO BE LINKED TO SPIKE THROUGH HER. CAN YOU STILL SEE IT?
YES! BUT I CAN'T STOP... IT'S LIKE I'M ON A ROLLER COASTER!
TH-THEN YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE OF THE JOURNEY ANYMORE.
IT IS.
OH, GOD... ANGELUS.
DARLA...
THE MASTER!
WIL, I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF THIS! WHEN IS IT GOING TO--
WHUFF!
OKAY, I THOUGHT THE WHOLE POINT OF ASTRAL FORMS IS THAT THEY'RE NOT SOLID...
BUFFY? =KZZ= LOSING YOU =SZZT=

SLAYER. SO NICE OF YOU TO VISIT.
I AM ARCHAELIS.
AH, CRAP.
WELCOME TO MY HUMBLE HELL.
WILLOW! GET ME OUT OF HERE!
WILLOW?
CRUNCH


BUFFY? BUFFY!
I CAN'T WAKE HER UP!
GILES! WAKE SPIKE UP!
SHRRRP
Y-YES, OF COURSE--
I--I CAN'T!
WE HAVE TO! SOMETHING'S KILLING BUFFY!
N-NO... HRRRR...
RRRAAAGGHH!
PHAAA!


BUFFY! ARE YOU--
I--I'M OKAY. I'LL BE FINE.
I WAS IN A HELL DIMENSION. THE DEMON DIDN'T WANT TO LET ME GO...SO I PUSHED THE OTHER WAY. BROKE THROUGH THE ILLUSION AND FIGURED OUT WHERE HE IS NOW, JUST BEFORE YOU PULLED ME OUT.
HE'S HERE. ON OUR WORLD. IN *OUR CITY.*
HE CALLED HIMSELF *ARCHAEUS.*
LITERALLY, "*THE OLD ONE.*" I'VE RUN ACROSS THE NAME BEFORE, WHILE RESEARCHING *THE MASTER.* HE'D DETERMINED IT WAS ARCHAEUS'S ESSENCE THAT ANIMATED HIM.
RIGHT...A VAMPIRE'S MADE WHEN PART OF A DEMON'S ESSENCE ENTERS A HUMAN BODY. BUT DOES THAT MEAN WHEN THAT VAMPIRE SIRES SOMEONE, THE *SAME* DEMON...?
ONLY IF SAID DEMON IS ESPECIALLY POWERFUL. IF TRUE IN THIS CASE, IT MEANS OFFSHOOTS OF ARCHAEUS'S ESSENCE THEN ENTERED DARLA, ANGELUS, DRUSILLA... AND SPIKE.
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY YOU HAD THE DREAMS. AND SAW *YOURSELF* IN THE PLACE OF ARCHAEUS.
ANGEL... *AND* SPIKE?
I LITERALLY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SAME GUY TWICE?


WAIT, DRU TOO? I SHAGGED MYSELF?
DID YOU SAY, "LOVE"?
UH...
IT'S NOT QUITE THAT SIMPLE. A VAMPIRE ISN'T JUST THE DEMON. IT'S A COMBINATION OF THE DEMON'S ESSENCE AND THE HUMAN HOST'S PERSONA... OFTEN ITS DARKEST ASPECTS.
BUT YES...IT NOW APPEARS THAT, WITH VERY POWERFUL DEMONS LIKE ARCHAEUS, THERE IS A COMMON THREAD... AND THAT, TO A DEGREE, THEY CAN EXERT INFLUENCE ON THEIR "DESCENDANTS."
IF THIS ARCHAEUS IS HERE, WE NEED TO STOP HIM. HE'S ONLY GOING TO GET STRONGER. DID YOU SEE WHERE HE IS IN THE CITY?
THE WATERFRONT. SORRY...I WISH I COULD GET MORE SPECIFIC. I SHOULD KNOW THE AREA WHEN I SEE IT, THOUGH.
OKAY. WE NEED TO GO NOW, BEFORE HE CAN RELOCATE.
SLAYER. A MINUTE OF YOUR TIME.


WHAT YOU SAW IN THERE--
SPIKE...
YOU WERE RIGHT. THERE WAS A LOT OF BAD.
AND SOME THINGS SO BEAUTIFUL, THEY'RE WORTH A HUNDRED YEARS OF BAD.
I'LL BE HONEST. IT'S A LOT TO PROCESS, AND IT'LL TAKE TIME BEFORE I REALLY KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT ALL. WHEN I DO, I'LL TELL YOU.
BUT IN THE MEANTIME...
...WE'VE GOT WORK.

THE PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO.
YOU HEAR THAT?
NO SEA LIONS. NO BIRDS. NOTHING.
THIS FEELS LIKE THE PLACE...BUT THERE WAS A DEFINITE UNDERGROUND COMPONENT.
LOT OF HUGE STORM DRAINS IN THE CITY. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THERE ARE A FEW UNDER HERE.
SPREAD OUT. BE READY FOR ANYTHING. HE MAY KNOW WE'RE COMING. SEE IF YOU CAN FIND A TRAPDOOR, OR HATCH, OR--

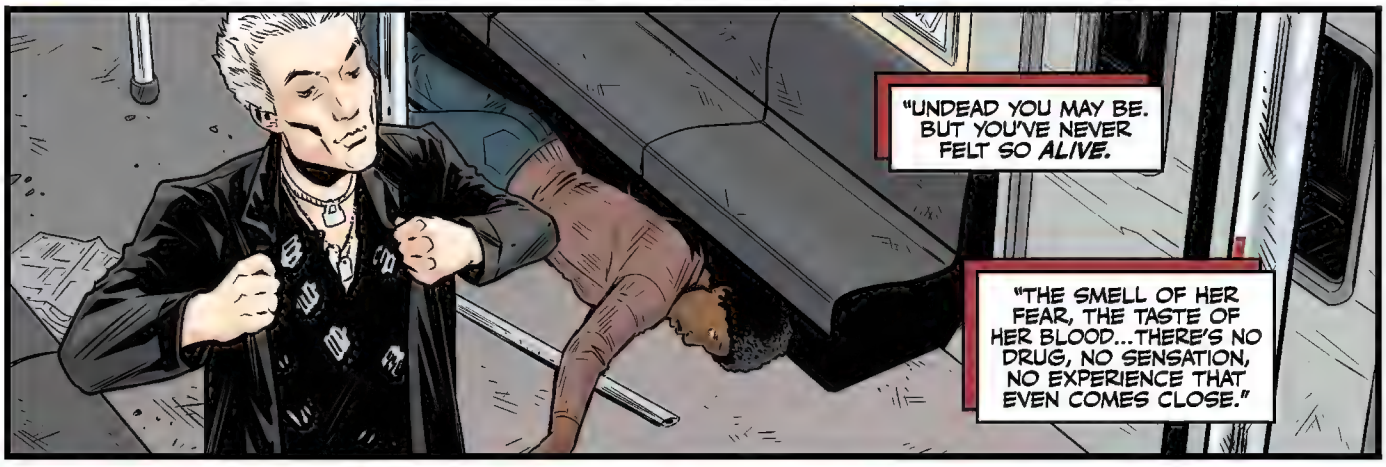
INCOMING!
AH, HELL, HE'S GOT MINIONS.
THEY'VE CAUGHT US IN AN AMBUSH!
BOOM
THAT NEEDS MINIONS?
BRAKOOOM

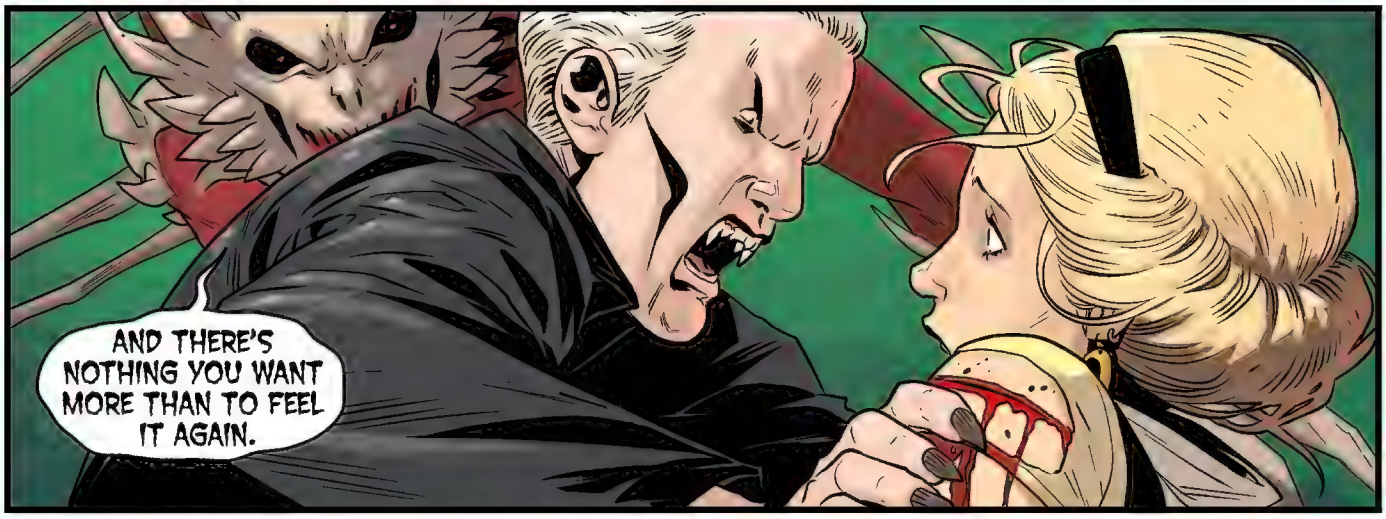
GREAT. MYSTIC SHIELD. HE'S A SPELL CASTER, TOO.
OH, YES. NOT ON YOUR LEVEL, LITTLE WITCH...
...BUT I HAVE OTHER ASSETS.
AGH!
WIL!
SLKT
HRRR!

THIS WON'T DO. TOO MANY DISTRACTIONS.
SPIKE. BE A GOOD BOY AND KILL YOUR PLAYMATE.
I AIN'T YOUR BOY, YOU OLD BASTARD.
MAY HAVE PARTA YOU IN ME--WHICH IS DISGUSTIN' ENOUGH-- BUT I ALSO GOT MY SOUL. THAT'LL TRUMP YOU EVERY TIME.
EVERY TIME? LET'S PUT THAT TO THE TEST, SHALL WE?
SLASH
NNAH!
SMELL THAT. SLAYER BLOOD. NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT IN THE WORLD, IS THERE?
SPIKE, YOU CAN FIGHT THIS! I KNOW YOU CAN!
I--I--

I WON'T...
YOU CAN'T...
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH WORSE THAN THIS. HE CAN'T MAKE YOU DO SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO.
AND I KNOW THE LAST THING YOU WANT TO DO IS HURT ME.
BUFFY...
...RUN.
RRRAAAGGHH!

"THERE IS NO BETTER FEELING THAN KILLING A SLAYER.
"DEFEATING SOMEONE WHO EXISTS TO END YOU. WHO WAS CREATED TO BE *BETTER* THAN YOU. IT'S LIKE SPITTING IN THE EYE OF THE UNIVERSE.


"UNDEAD YOU MAY BE. BUT YOU'VE NEVER FELT SO *ALIVE.*
"THE SMELL OF HER FEAR, THE TASTE OF HER BLOOD...THERE'S NO DRUG, NO SENSATION, NO EXPERIENCE THAT EVEN COMES CLOSE."

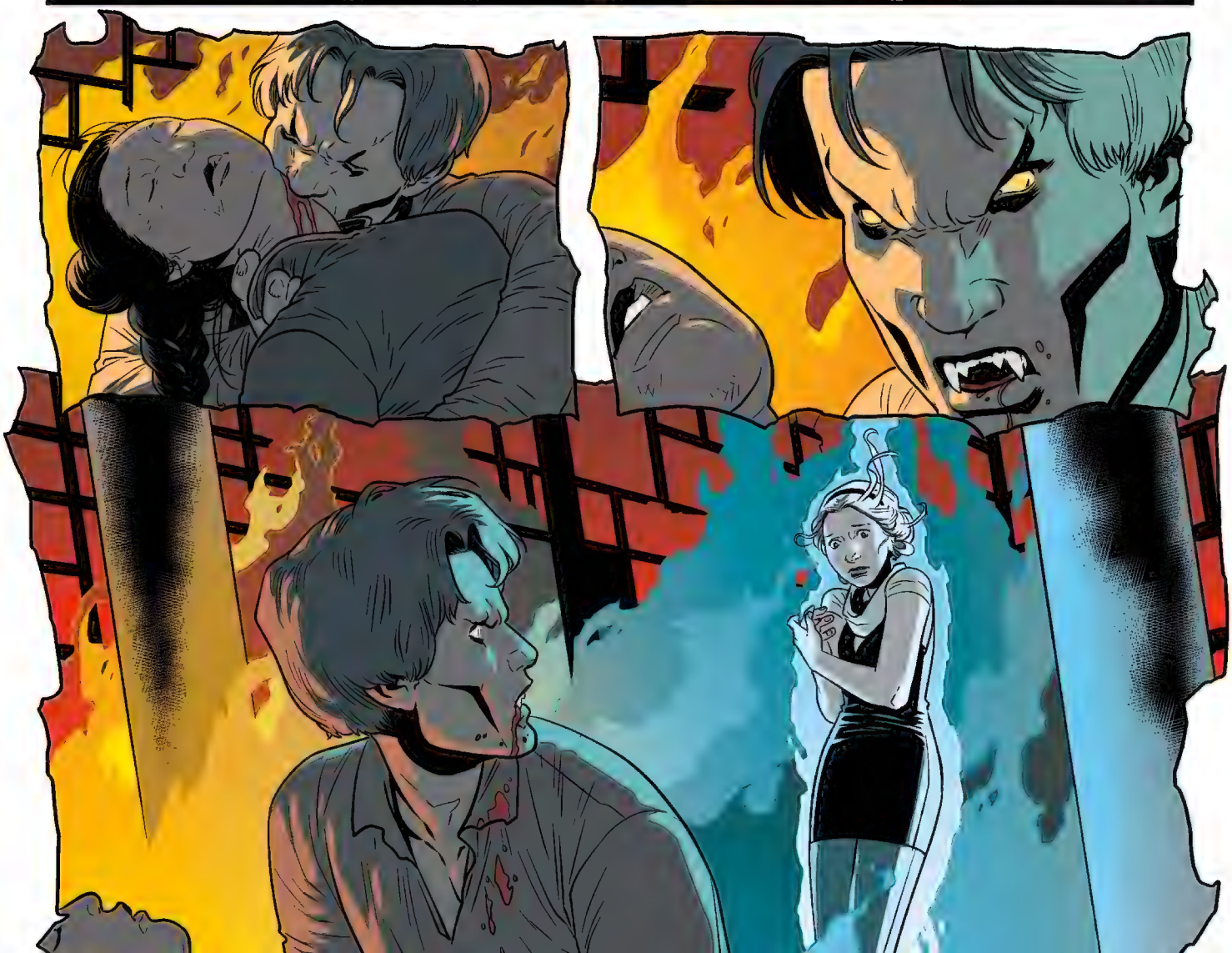

AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU WANT MORE THAN TO FEEL IT AGAIN.

RELATIONSHIP STATUS: COMPLICATED, CONCLUSION

BUFFY!
WILLOW, SNAP HIM OUT OF IT!
I'M TRYING!
AND EVEN IF I LET YOU, IT WOULD HARDLY BE SO SIMPLE.
MY ESSENCE INHABITS YOUR FRIEND. HE IS FILLED WITH A CRAVING FOR BLOOD, FOR THE HUNT, THAT NEITHER YOU NOR HE CAN DENY.
HE'S WRONG, SPIKE. YOU HAVE A SOUL, TOO. YOU CAN FIGHT THIS!
PLEASE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP YOU WITHOUT KILLING YOU...

REMEMBER HOW IT WAS. EVERY TIME.
THE POWER...

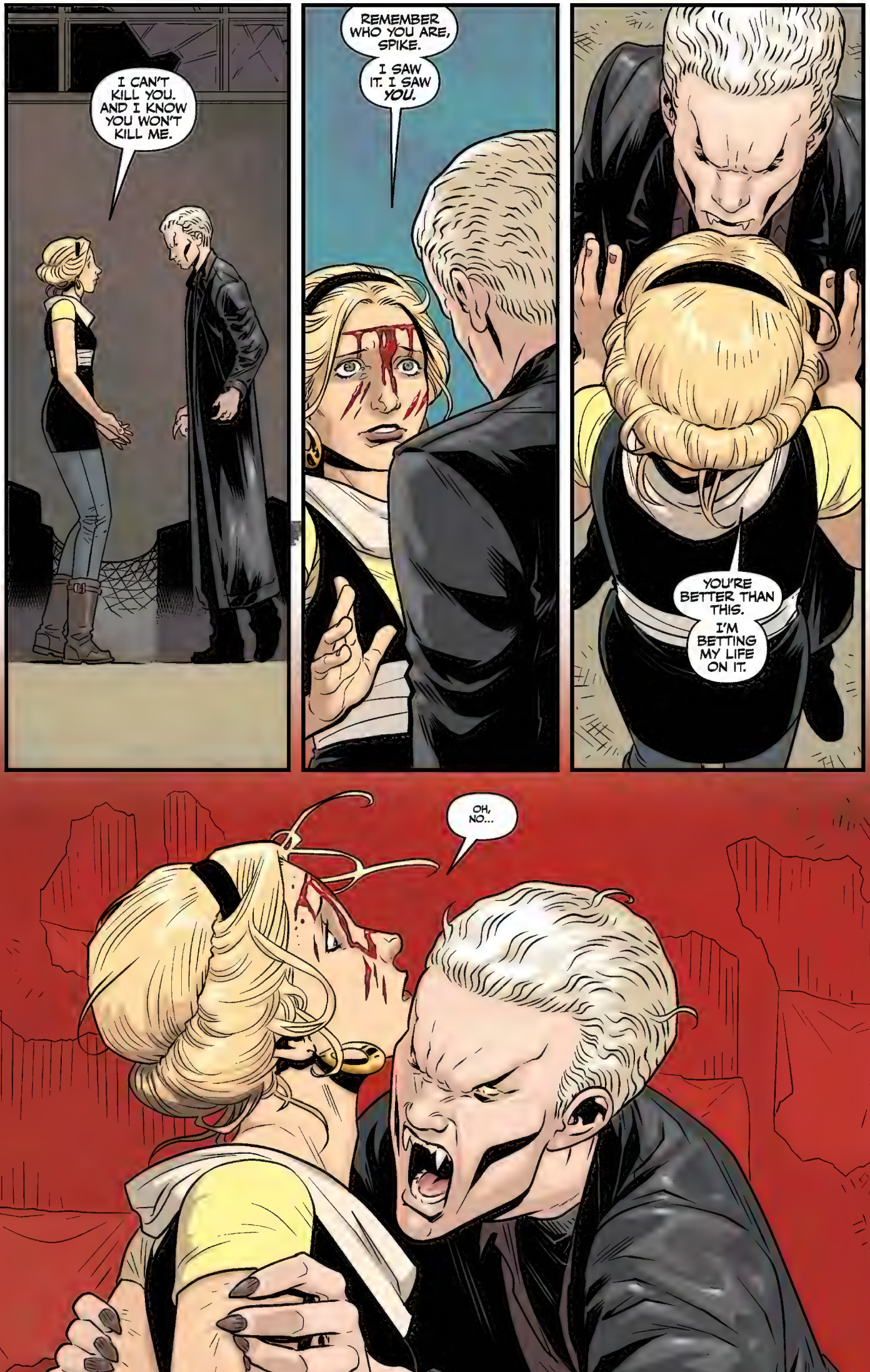
...THE ECSTASY.
Y-YES...

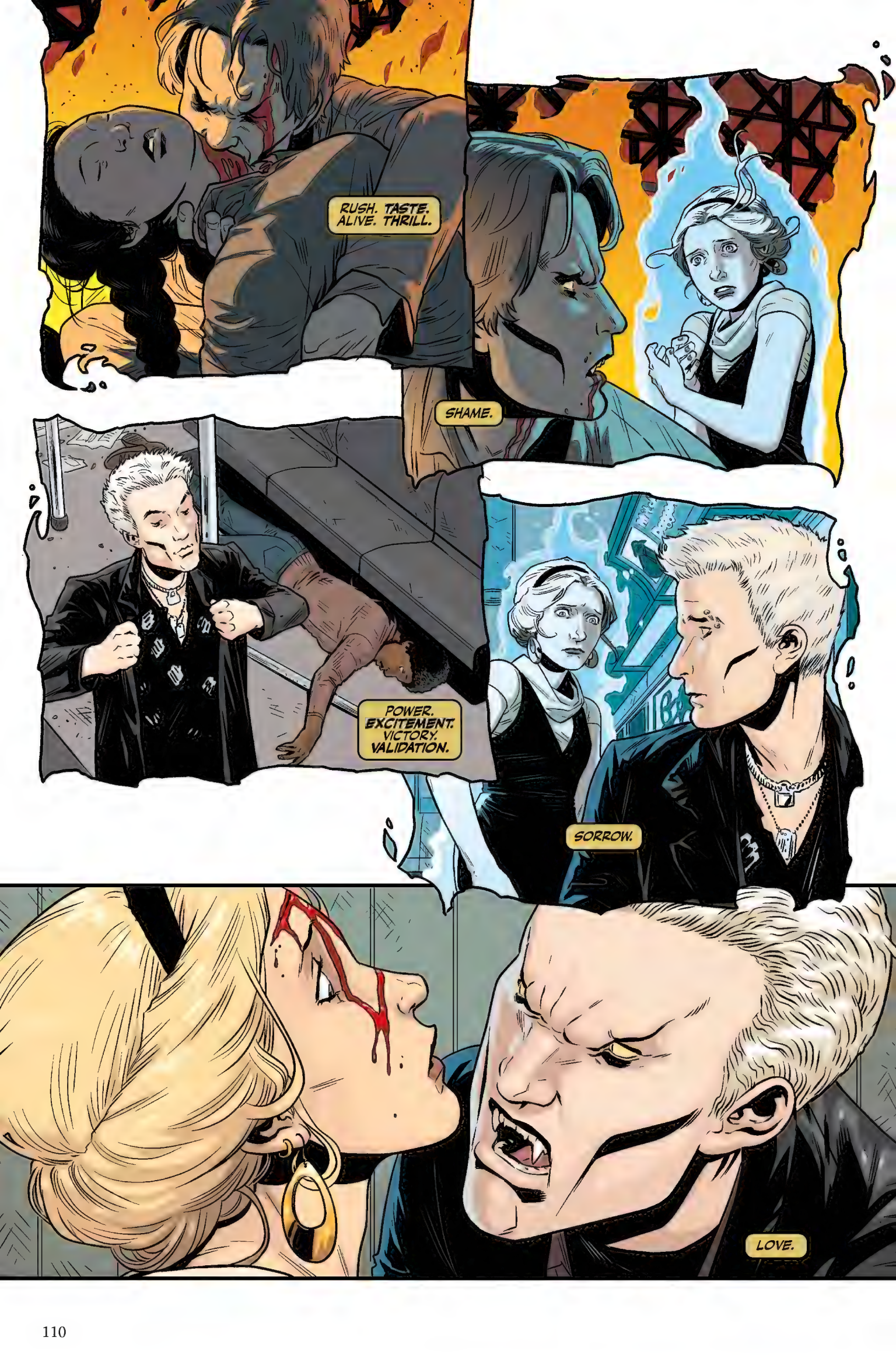


SSSS...
SLAYUNNHH!
BRAK
DAMN YOUR SOUL!
SHKK
GGAHH!
REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE, WILLIAM THE BLOODY!
SLIKT
OWW!
A HUNTER.
A DRINKER OF BLOOD.

GHHRAARR!
CONTINE
BUFFY! HE'LL KILL YOU!
YOU HAVE TO FIGHT BACK!
PAFT
BUFFY...
...SHE'S RIGHT.
I...
...I'M SORRY...
HSSS!

NO!!
CHOMP
GRRAA!
I WON'T HURT YOU. WE'RE NOT THERE YET.
I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY, SPIKE. WE...CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER. TRUST EACH OTHER.
WHICH IS WHY I'M PUTTING THIS DOWN.
YESSS...
NO!
CLANG
HAVE YOU GONE MAD?


I CAN'T KILL YOU. AND I KNOW YOU WON'T KILL ME.
REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE, SPIKE.
I SAW IT. I SAW YOU.
YOU'RE BETTER THAN THIS.
I'M BETTING MY LIFE ON IT.
OH, NO...


RUSH. TASTE. ALIVE. THRILL.
SHAME.
POWER. EXCITEMENT. VICTORY. VALIDATION.
SORROW.
LOVE.

NNNNNNOOOO!

I'M... NOT YOU.
NOT... YOURS.

I'M NO ONE'S PUPPET.
NEVER AGAIN.
GRRAAGGH!

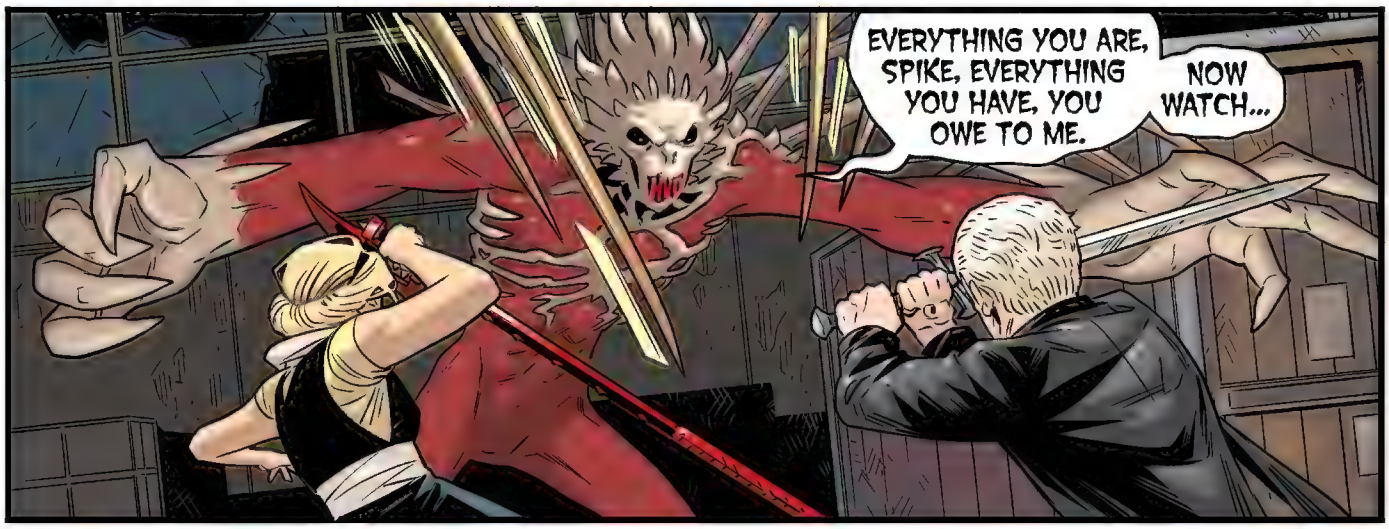
SORRY FOR THE MOMENT O' WEAKNESS. WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
DIDN'T DOUBT YOU FOR A MINUTE.
FWOOOSH
PAFT
PAFT
FOOLS. YOU OVERSTEP YOUR STATION!
I AM A LORD OF HELL!
GUHH!

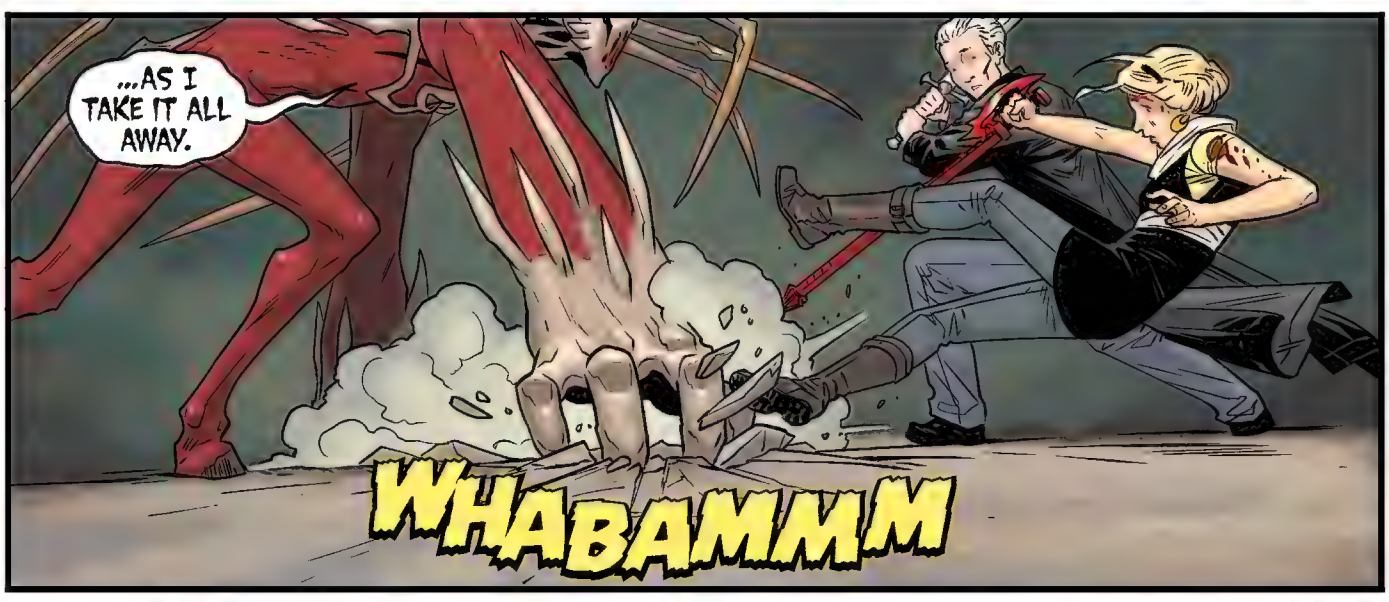
YEAH, WELL...

...WE'RE FAMILY.

THEN DIE TOGETHER.
LOAD-BEARING COLUMNS ALL ALONG THE WALLS...

THERE ARE WAYS I PREFER TO DO THINGS. DEBASING MY ENEMIES, LOWERING THEM TO UTTER DESPAIR, IS MY PREFERENCE.
ZRRAKKTT
HNGHH!
BUT SIMPLY SLAUGHTERING THEM IS EMINENTLY ACCEPTABLE.
WHABOOOM
WIL, YOU OKAY?
I'VE FELT BETTER.
WE'RE OUTCLASSED.
Y'THINK?
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE. REGROUP.
I WISH I KNEW HOW.
I DO.


EVERYTHING YOU ARE, SPIKE, EVERYTHING YOU HAVE, YOU OWE TO ME.
NOW WATCH...

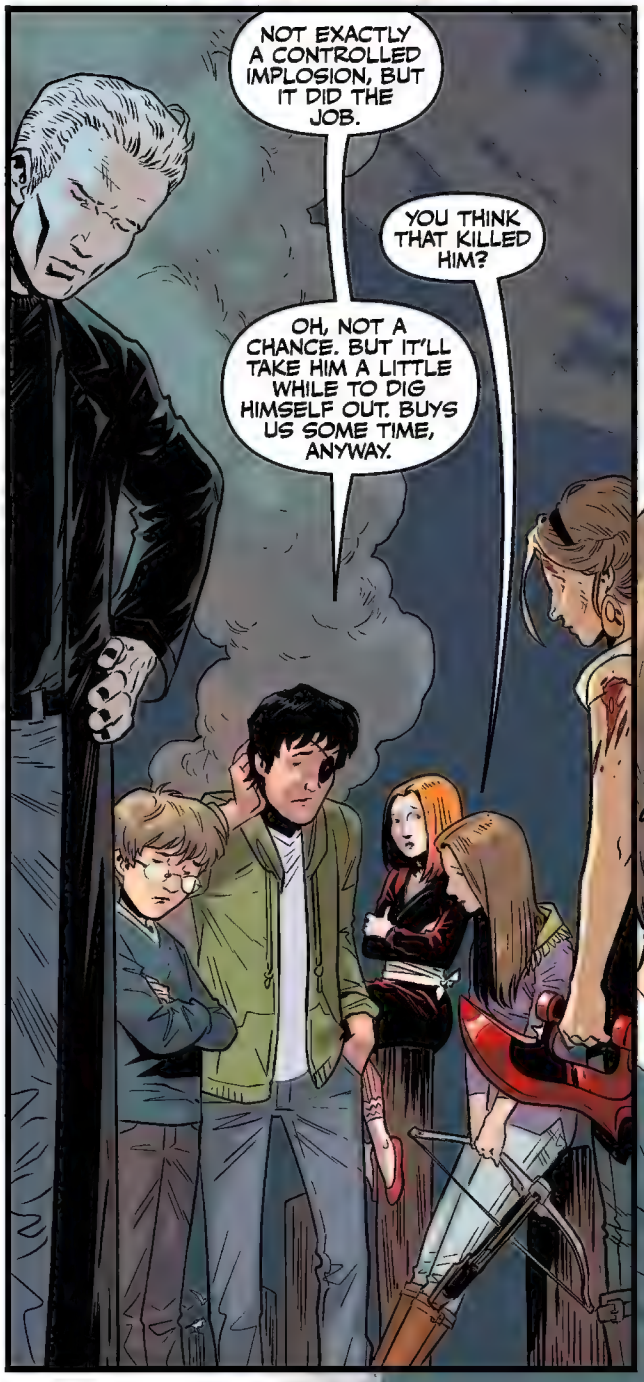

...AS I TAKE IT ALL AWAY.
WHABAMMM

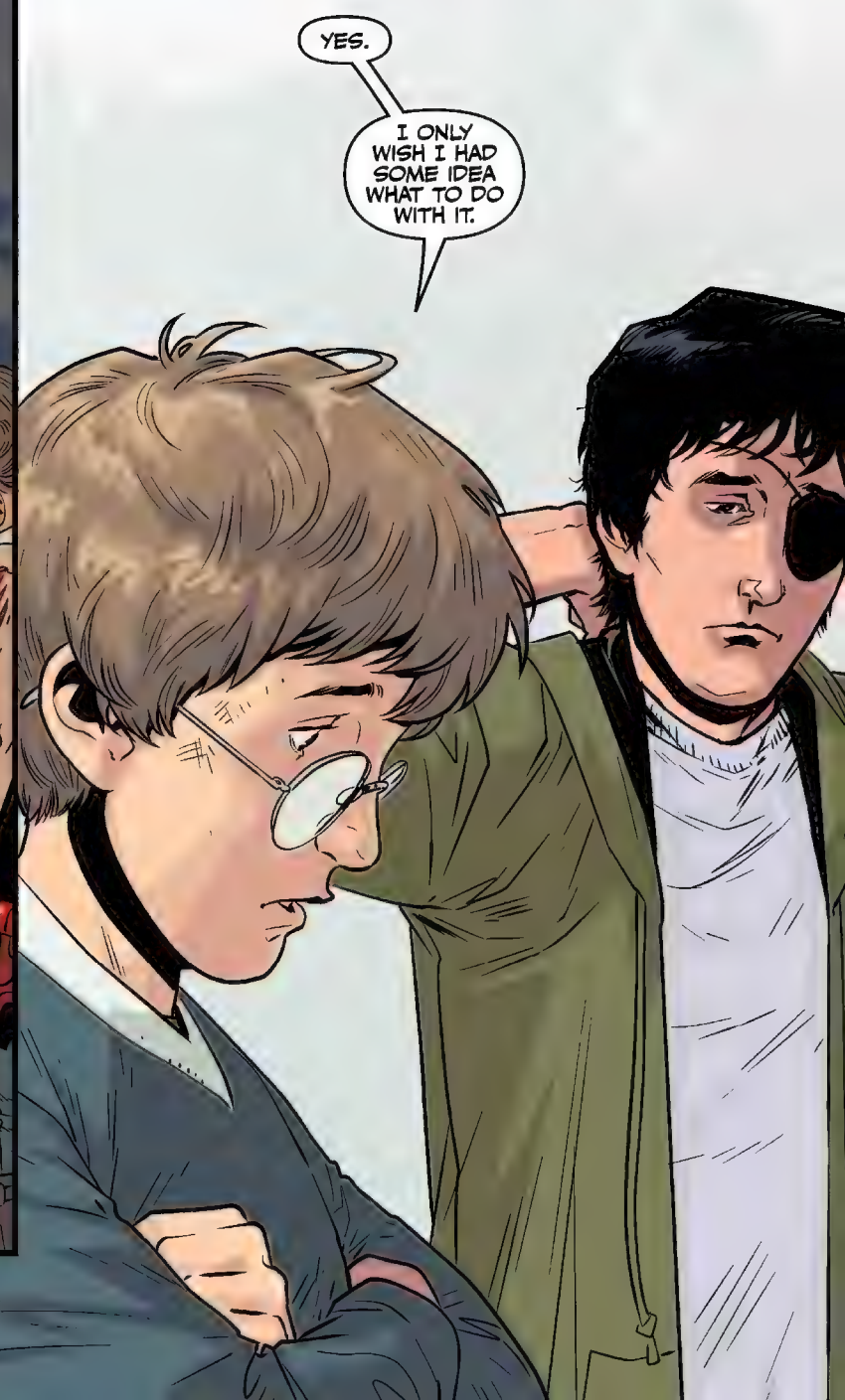
EVERYONE, BACK OFF! FORM UP ON ME!
THIS IS NO TIME FOR YOUR SUN TZU CRAP, HARRIS--
DO IT. WE'VE GOT NOTHING BETTER.

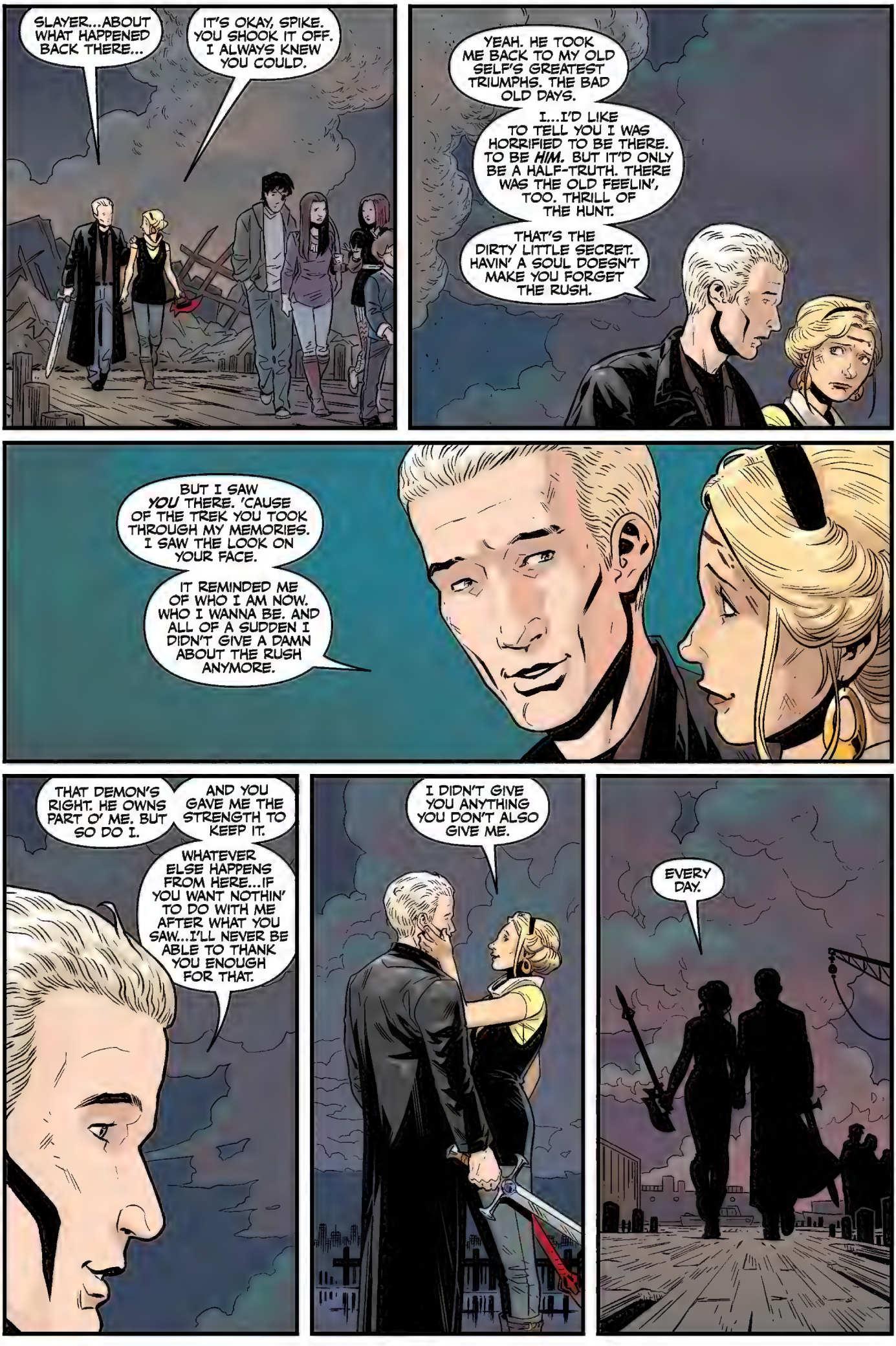
FINE.
I HOPE WE'RE NOT JUST GIVING THE BLIGHTER EASIER TARGETS.

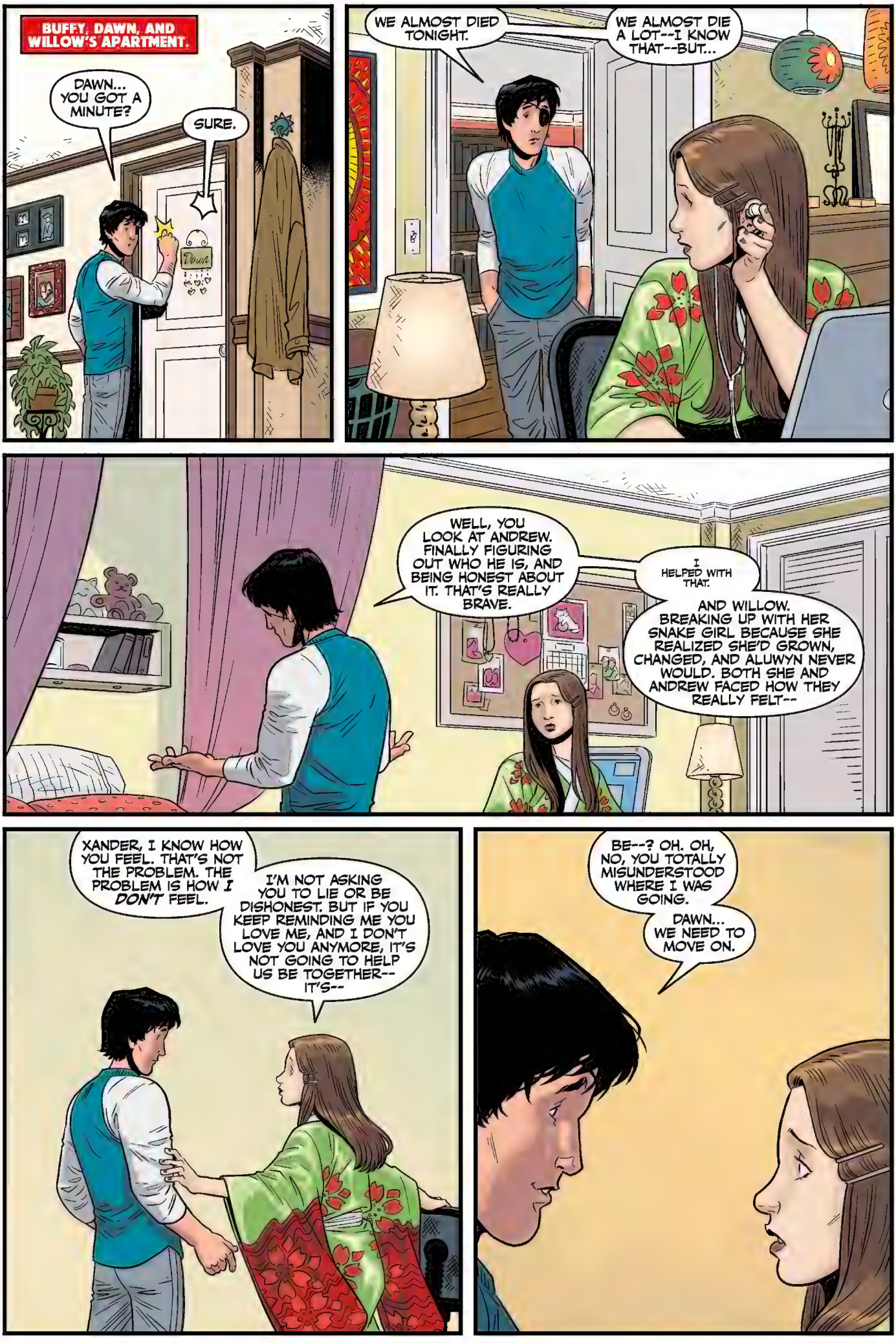
MORE LIKE MAKING *HIM* ONE.
SILLY LITTLE WITCH. YOU KNOW I CAN DEFEND AGAINST YOUR SPELLS.
YEAH...
...BUT THE WALLS JUST KINDA SIT THERE AND TAKE IT.
VRATHOOOM
RUN!!
BBRRMMMMMM
YES, RUN, WILLIAM THE BLOODY. YOUR FRUITLESS ATTEMPTS TO DENY YOUR HERITAGE AMUSE ME.
FOR IN TRUTH, YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF ESCAPE. NOT YOU...NOR ANY OF MY CHILDREN.

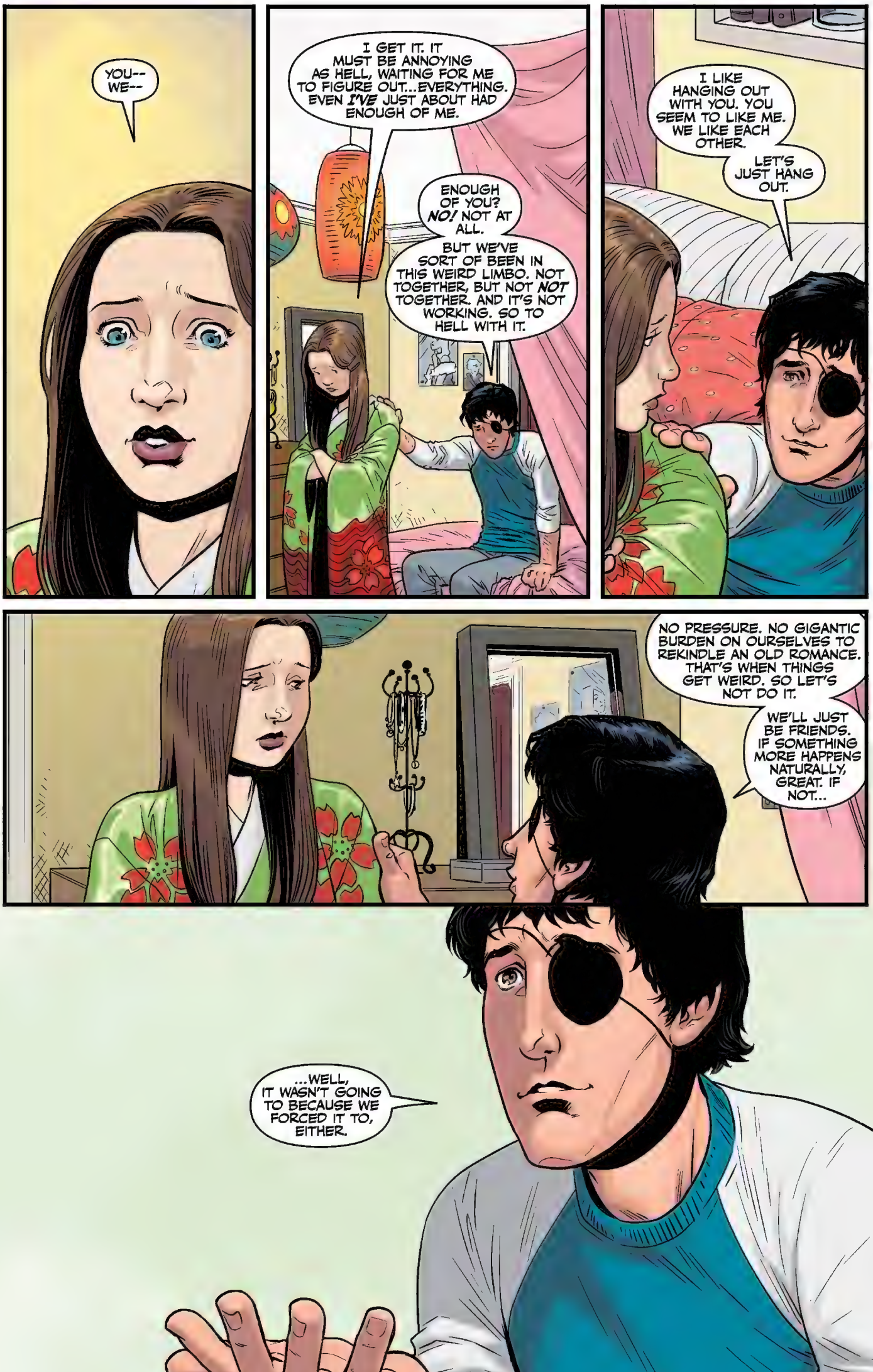
BRAWHOOOM

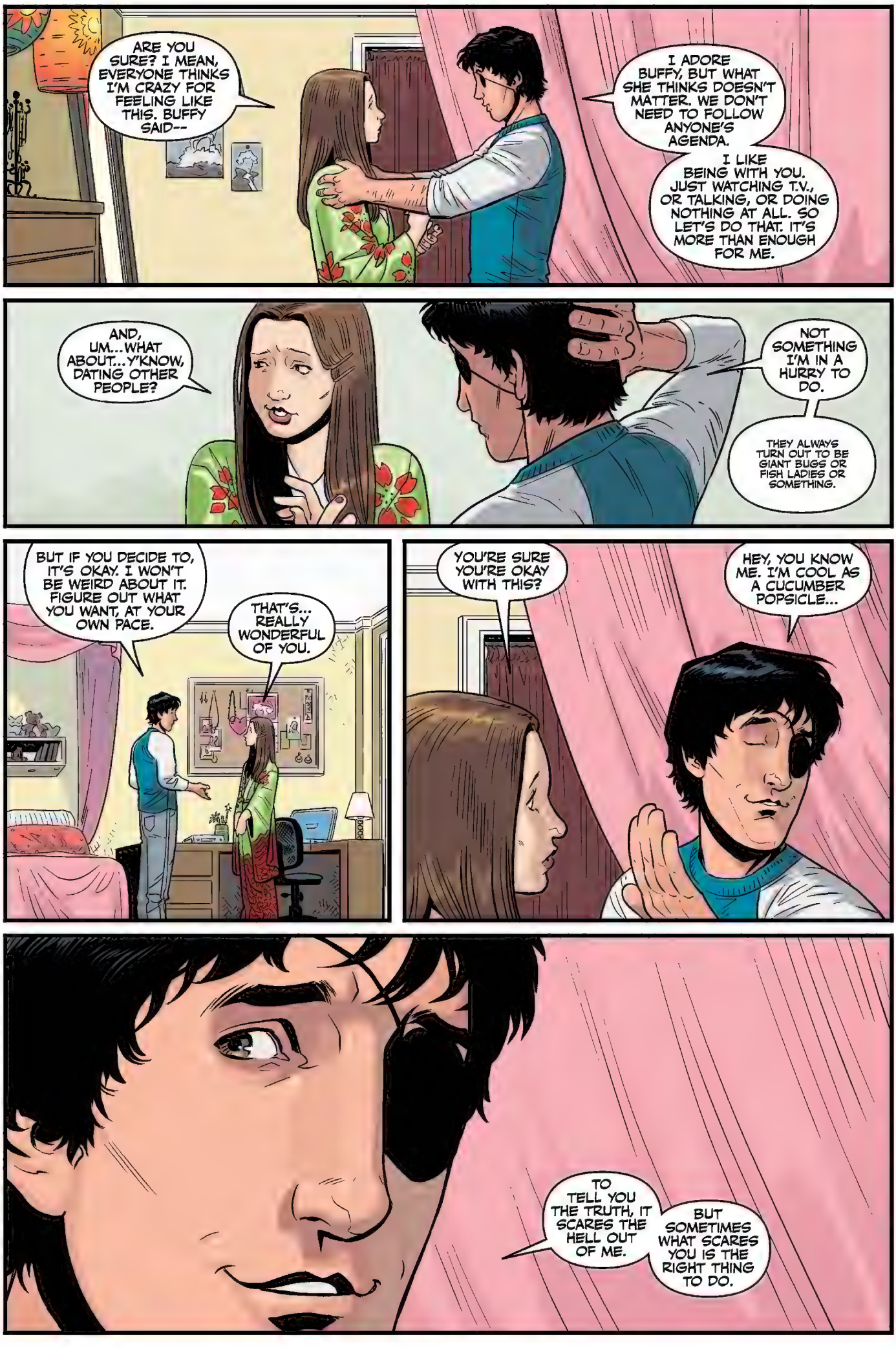

NOT EXACTLY A CONTROLLED IMPLOSION, BUT IT DID THE JOB.
YOU THINK THAT KILLED HIM?
OH, NOT A CHANCE. BUT IT'LL TAKE HIM A LITTLE WHILE TO DIG HIMSELF OUT. BUYS US SOME TIME, ANYWAY.

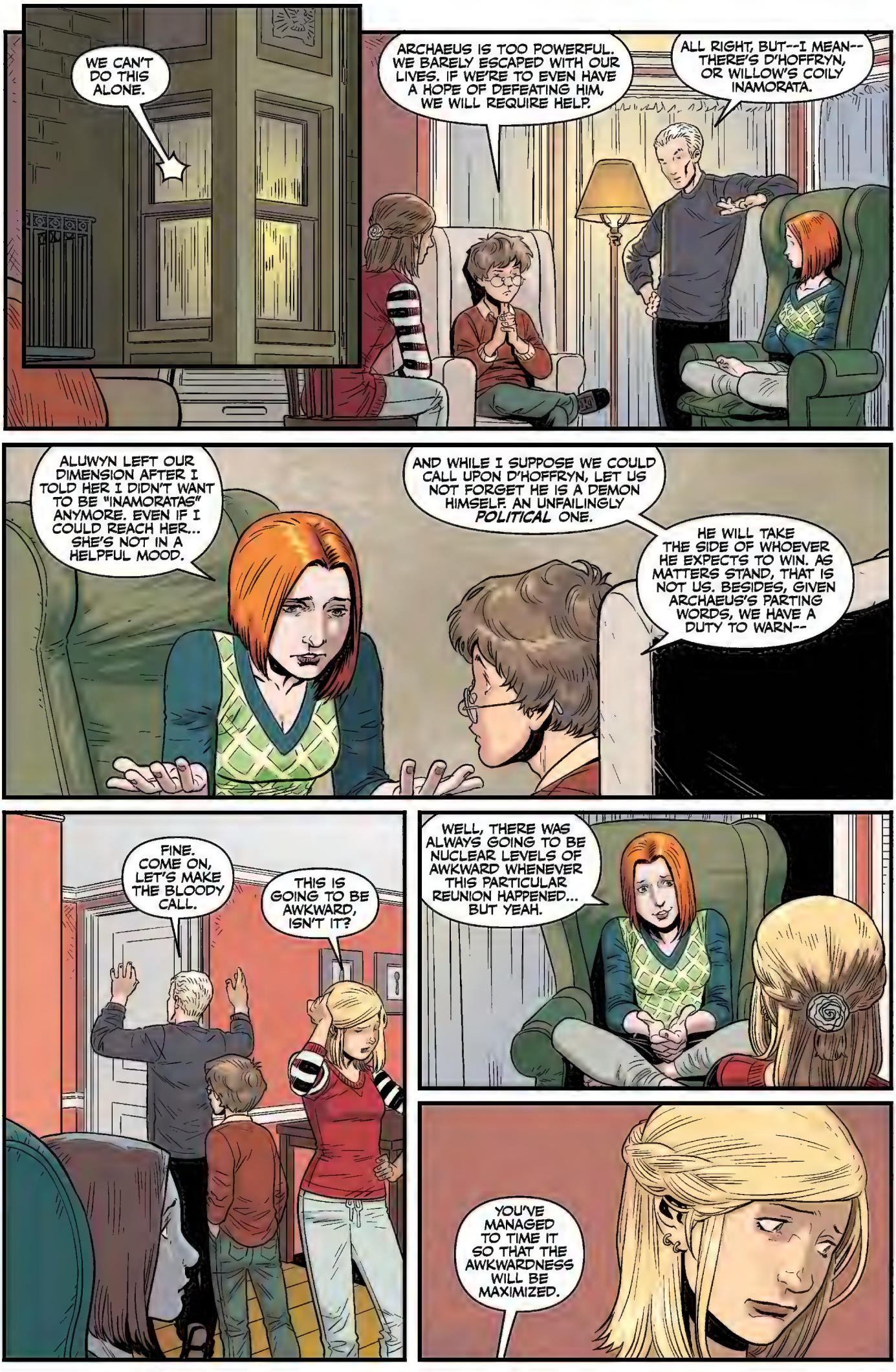

YES.
I ONLY WISH I HAD SOME IDEA WHAT TO DO WITH IT.

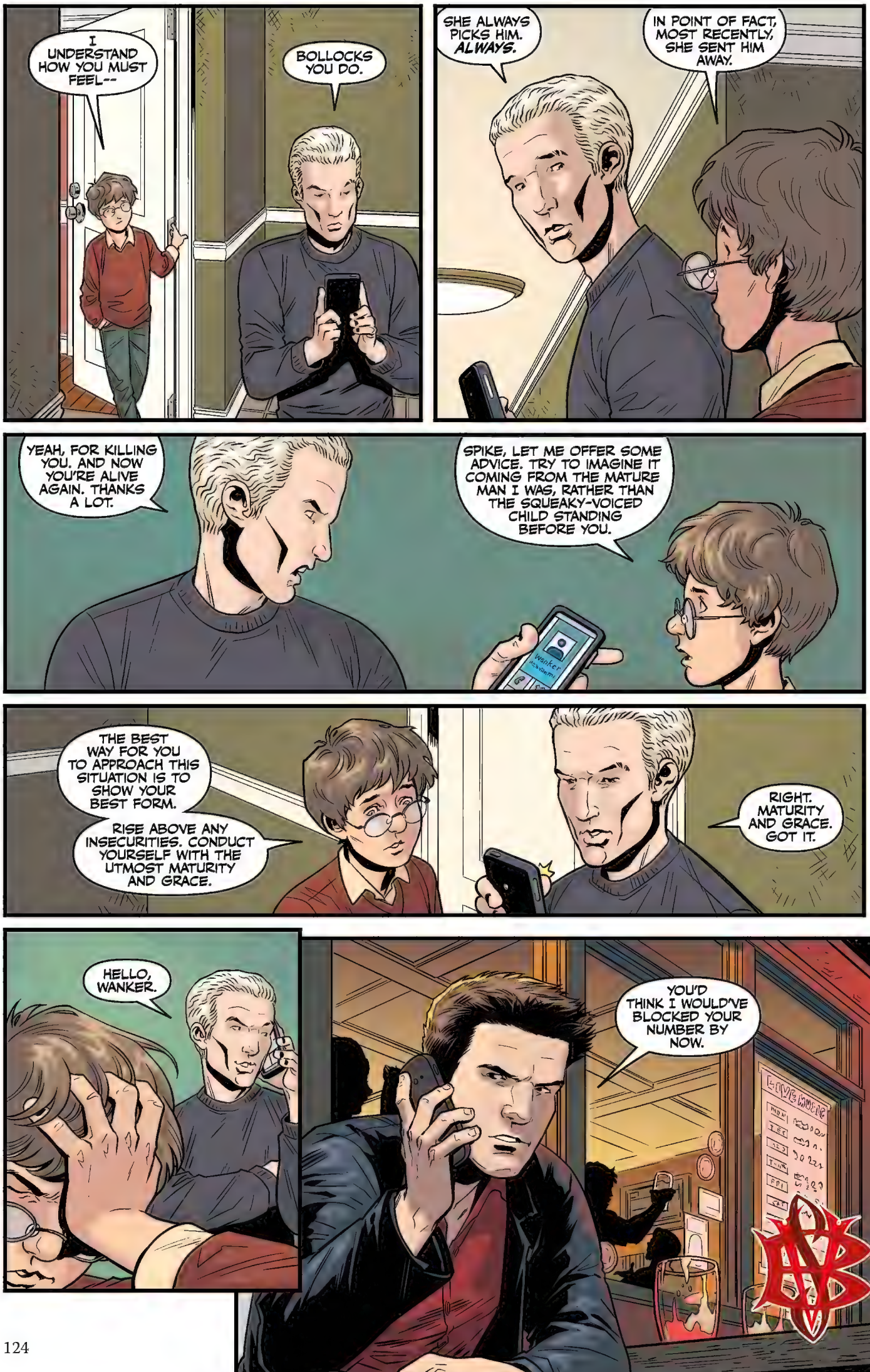

SLAYER...ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE...
IT'S OKAY, SPIKE. YOU SHOOK IT OFF. I ALWAYS KNEW YOU COULD.
YEAH. HE TOOK ME BACK TO MY OLD SELF'S GREATEST TRIUMPHS. THE BAD OLD DAYS.
I...I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU I WAS HORRIFIED TO BE THERE. TO BE *HIM.* BUT IT'D ONLY BE A HALF-TRUTH. THERE WAS THE OLD FEELIN', TOO. THRILL OF THE HUNT.
THAT'S THE DIRTY LITTLE SECRET. HAVIN' A SOUL DOESN'T MAKE YOU FORGET THE RUSH.
BUT I SAW *YOU* THERE. 'CAUSE OF THE TREK YOU TOOK THROUGH MY MEMORIES. I SAW THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE.
IT REMINDED ME OF WHO I AM NOW. WHO I WANNA BE. AND ALL OF A SUDDEN I DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE RUSH ANYMORE.
THAT DEMON'S RIGHT. HE OWNS PART O' ME. BUT SO DO I.
AND YOU GAVE ME THE STRENGTH TO KEEP IT.
WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS FROM HERE...IF YOU WANT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH ME AFTER WHAT YOU SAW...I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR THAT.
I DIDN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING YOU DON'T ALSO GIVE ME.
EVERY DAY.

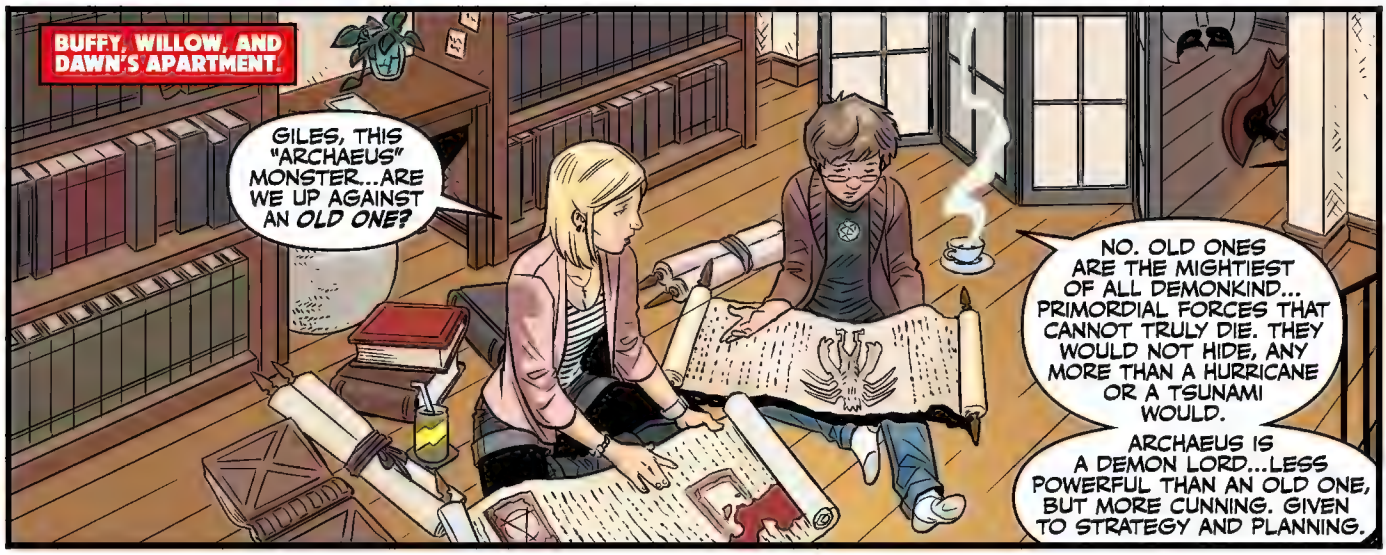

BUFFY, DAWN, AND WILLOW'S APARTMENT.
DAWN... YOU GOT A MINUTE?
SURE.
Dawn
WE ALMOST DIED TONIGHT.
WE ALMOST DIE A LOT--I KNOW THAT--BUT...
WELL, YOU LOOK AT ANDREW. FINALLY FIGURING OUT WHO HE IS, AND BEING HONEST ABOUT IT. THAT'S REALLY BRAVE.
I HELPED WITH THAT.
AND WILLOW. BREAKING UP WITH HER SNAKE GIRL BECAUSE SHE REALIZED SHE'D GROWN, CHANGED, AND ALUWYN NEVER WOULD. BOTH SHE AND ANDREW FACED HOW THEY REALLY FELT--
XANDER, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM IS HOW I DON'T FEEL.
I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO LIE OR BE DISHONEST. BUT IF YOU KEEP REMINDING ME YOU LOVE ME, AND I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE, IT'S NOT GOING TO HELP US BE TOGETHER-- IT'S--
BE--? OH. OH, NO, YOU TOTALLY MISUNDERSTOOD WHERE I WAS GOING.
DAWN... WE NEED TO MOVE ON.

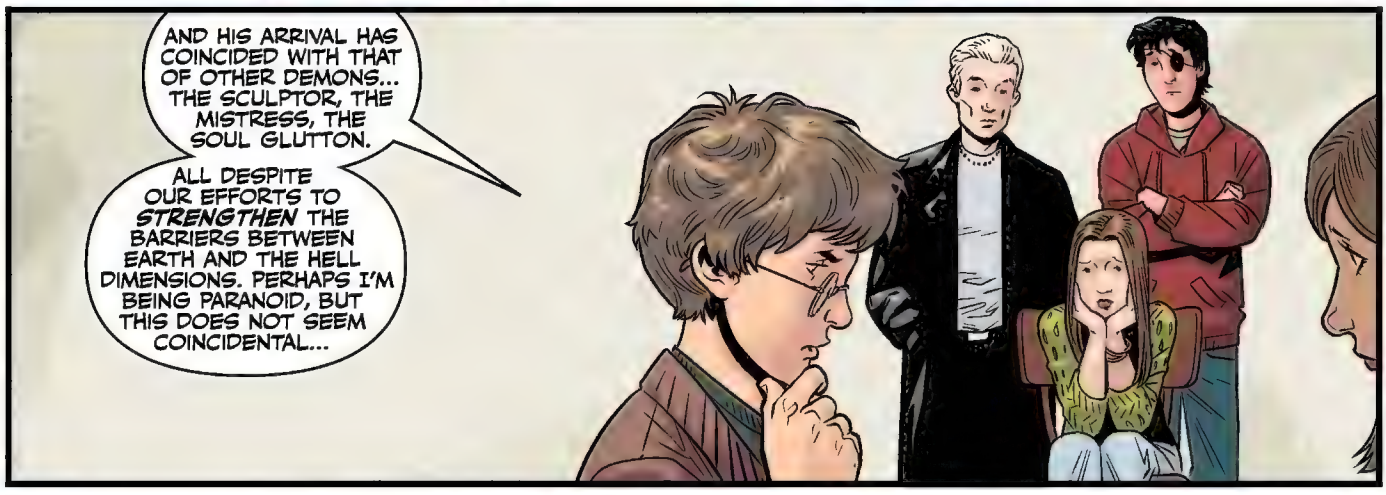

YOU-- WE--
I GET IT. IT MUST BE ANNOYING AS HELL, WAITING FOR ME TO FIGURE OUT...EVERYTHING. EVEN *I'VE* JUST ABOUT HAD ENOUGH OF ME.
ENOUGH OF YOU? *NO!* NOT AT ALL.
BUT WE'VE SORT OF BEEN IN THIS WEIRD LIMBO. NOT TOGETHER, BUT NOT *NOT* TOGETHER. AND IT'S NOT WORKING. SO TO HELL WITH IT.
I LIKE HANGING OUT WITH YOU. YOU SEEM TO LIKE ME. WE LIKE EACH OTHER.
LET'S JUST HANG OUT.
NO PRESSURE. NO GIGANTIC BURDEN ON OURSELVES TO REKINDLE AN OLD ROMANCE. THAT'S WHEN THINGS GET WEIRD. SO LET'S NOT DO IT.
WE'LL JUST BE FRIENDS. IF SOMETHING MORE HAPPENS NATURALLY, GREAT. IF NOT...
...WELL, IT WASN'T GOING TO BECAUSE WE FORCED IT TO, EITHER.

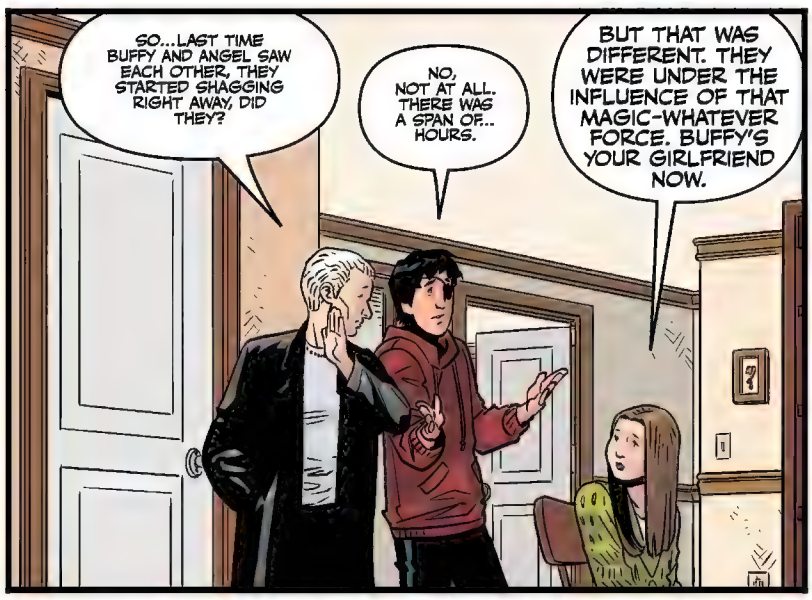

ARE YOU SURE? I MEAN, EVERYONE THINKS I'M CRAZY FOR FEELING LIKE THIS. BUFFY SAID--
I ADORE BUFFY, BUT WHAT SHE THINKS DOESN'T MATTER. WE DON'T NEED TO FOLLOW ANYONE'S AGENDA.
I LIKE BEING WITH YOU. JUST WATCHING T.V., OR TALKING, OR DOING NOTHING AT ALL. SO LET'S DO THAT. IT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR ME.
AND, UM...WHAT ABOUT...Y'KNOW, DATING OTHER PEOPLE?
NOT SOMETHING I'M IN A HURRY TO DO.
THEY ALWAYS TURN OUT TO BE GIANT BUGS OR FISH LADIES OR SOMETHING.
BUT IF YOU DECIDE TO, IT'S OKAY. I WON'T BE WEIRD ABOUT IT. FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU WANT, AT YOUR OWN PACE.
THAT'S... REALLY WONDERFUL OF YOU.
YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS?
HEY, YOU KNOW ME. I'M COOL AS A CUCUMBER POPSICLE...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT SCARES THE HELL OUT OF ME.
BUT SOMETIMES WHAT SCARES YOU IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.


WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE.
ARCHAEUS IS TOO POWERFUL. WE BARELY ESCAPED WITH OUR LIVES. IF WE'RE TO EVEN HAVE A HOPE OF DEFEATING HIM, WE WILL REQUIRE HELP.
ALL RIGHT, BUT--I MEAN-- THERE'S D'HOFFRYN, OR WILLOW'S COILY INAMORATA.
ALUWYN LEFT OUR DIMENSION AFTER I TOLD HER I DIDN'T WANT TO BE "INAMORATAS" ANYMORE. EVEN IF I COULD REACH HER... SHE'S NOT IN A HELPFUL MOOD.
AND WHILE I SUPPOSE WE COULD CALL UPON D'HOFFRYN, LET US NOT FORGET HE IS A DEMON HIMSELF. AN UNFAILINGLY *POLITICAL* ONE.
HE WILL TAKE THE SIDE OF WHOEVER HE EXPECTS TO WIN. AS MATTERS STAND, THAT IS NOT US. BESIDES, GIVEN ARCHAEUS'S PARTING WORDS, WE HAVE A DUTY TO WARN--
FINE. COME ON, LET'S MAKE THE BLOODY CALL.
THIS IS GOING TO BE AWKWARD, ISN'T IT?
WELL, THERE WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE NUCLEAR LEVELS OF AWKWARD WHENEVER THIS PARTICULAR REUNION HAPPENED... BUT YEAH.
YOU'VE MANAGED TO TIME IT SO THAT THE AWKWARDNESS WILL BE MAXIMIZED.


I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MUST FEEL--
BOLLOCKS YOU DO.
SHE ALWAYS PICKS HIM. ALWAYS.
IN POINT OF FACT, MOST RECENTLY, SHE SENT HIM AWAY.
YEAH, FOR KILLING YOU. AND NOW YOU'RE ALIVE AGAIN. THANKS A LOT.
SPIKE, LET ME OFFER SOME ADVICE. TRY TO IMAGINE IT COMING FROM THE MATURE MAN I WAS, RATHER THAN THE SQUEAKY-VOICED CHILD STANDING BEFORE YOU.
THE BEST WAY FOR YOU TO APPROACH THIS SITUATION IS TO SHOW YOUR BEST FORM.
RISE ABOVE ANY INSECURITIES. CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH THE UTMOST MATURITY AND GRACE.
RIGHT. MATURITY AND GRACE. GOT IT.
HELLO, WANKER.
YOU'D THINK I WOULD'VE BLOCKED YOUR NUMBER BY NOW.

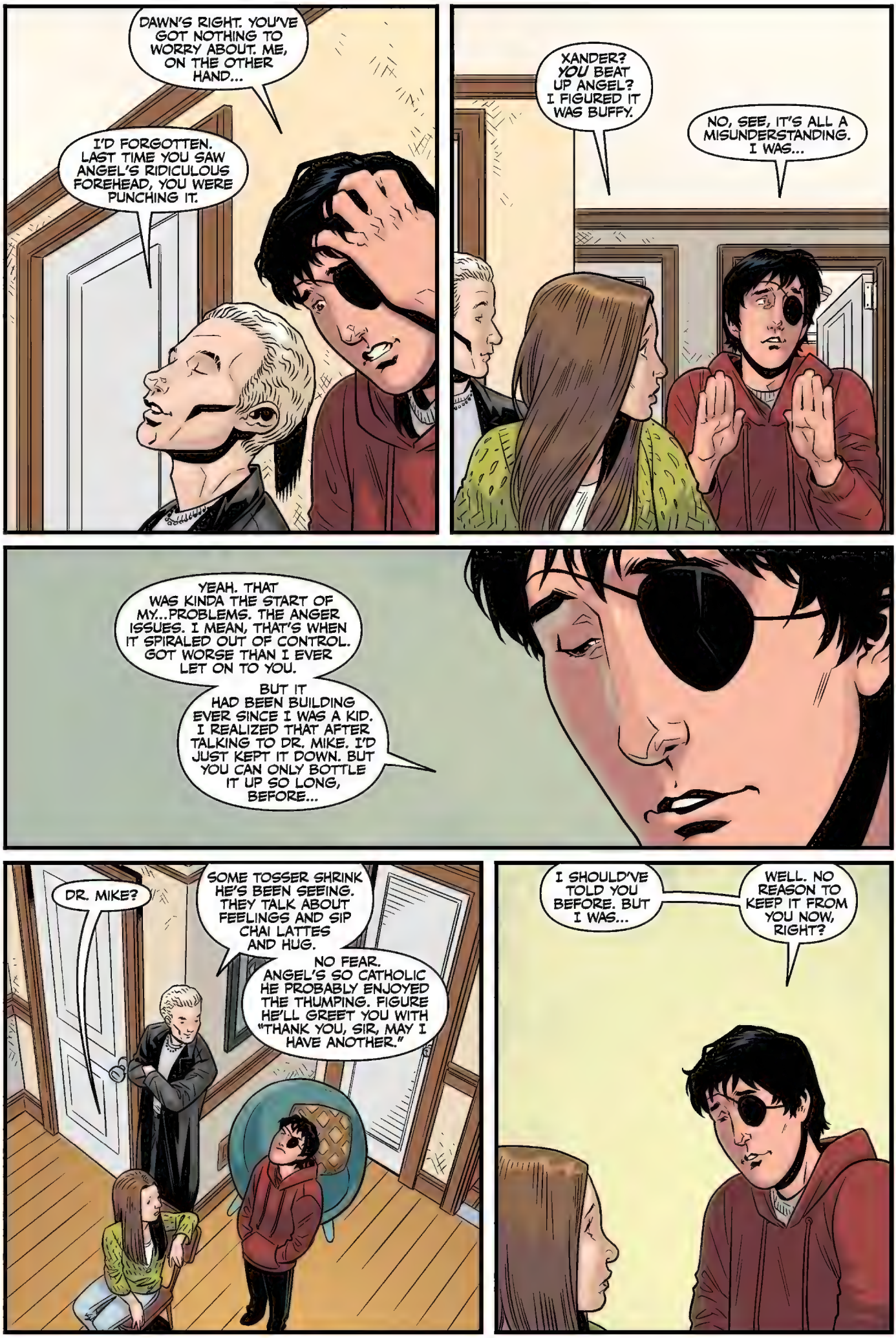

BUFFY, WILLOW, AND DAWN'S APARTMENT.
GILES, THIS "ARCHAEUS" MONSTER...ARE WE UP AGAINST AN *OLD ONE*?
NO. OLD ONES ARE THE MIGHTIEST OF ALL DEMONKIND... PRIMORDIAL FORCES THAT CANNOT TRULY DIE. THEY WOULD NOT HIDE, ANY MORE THAN A HURRICANE OR A TSUNAMI WOULD.
ARCHAEUS IS A DEMON LORD...LESS POWERFUL THAN AN OLD ONE, BUT MORE CUNNING. GIVEN TO STRATEGY AND PLANNING.

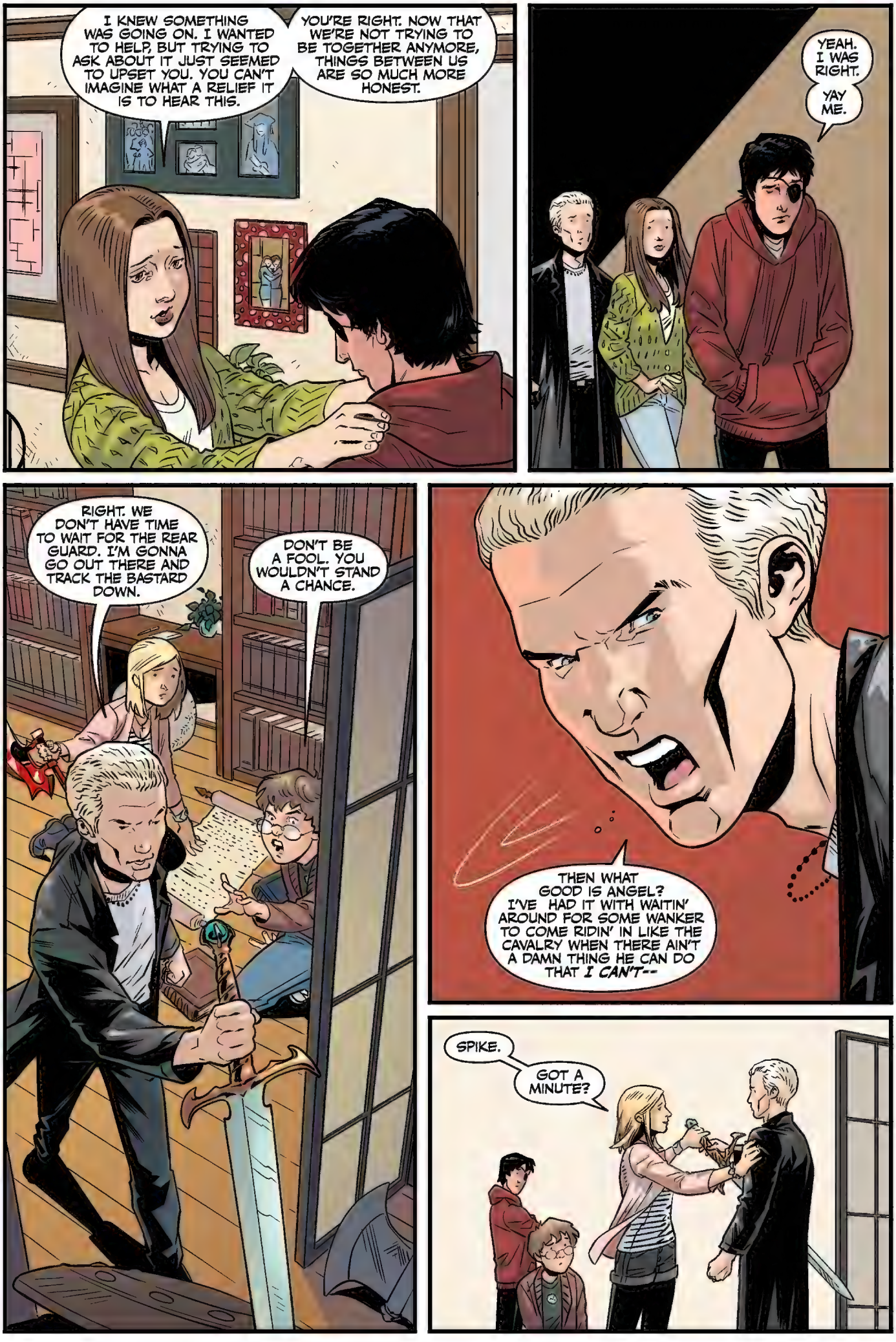

AND HIS ARRIVAL HAS COINCIDED WITH THAT OF OTHER DEMONS... THE SCULPTOR, THE MISTRESS, THE SOUL GLUTTON.
ALL DESPITE OUR EFFORTS TO ***STRENGTHEN*** THE BARRIERS BETWEEN EARTH AND THE HELL DIMENSIONS. PERHAPS I'M BEING PARANOID, BUT THIS DOES NOT SEEM COINCIDENTAL...

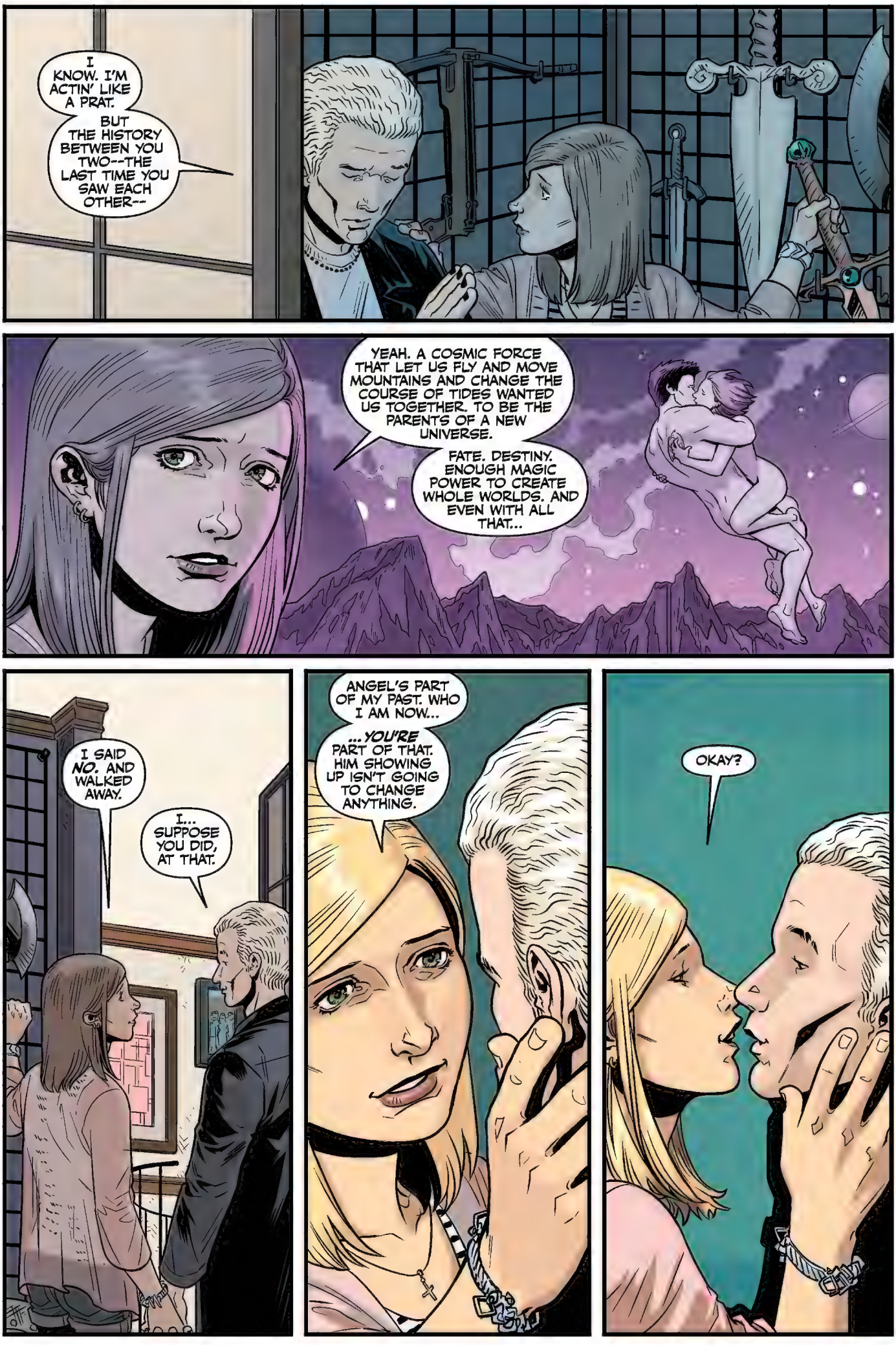

SO...LAST TIME BUFFY AND ANGEL SAW EACH OTHER, THEY STARTED SHAGGING RIGHT AWAY, DID THEY?
NO, NOT AT ALL. THERE WAS A SPAN OF... HOURS.
BUT THAT WAS DIFFERENT. THEY WERE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THAT MAGIC-WHATEVER FORCE. BUFFY'S YOUR GIRLFRIEND NOW.

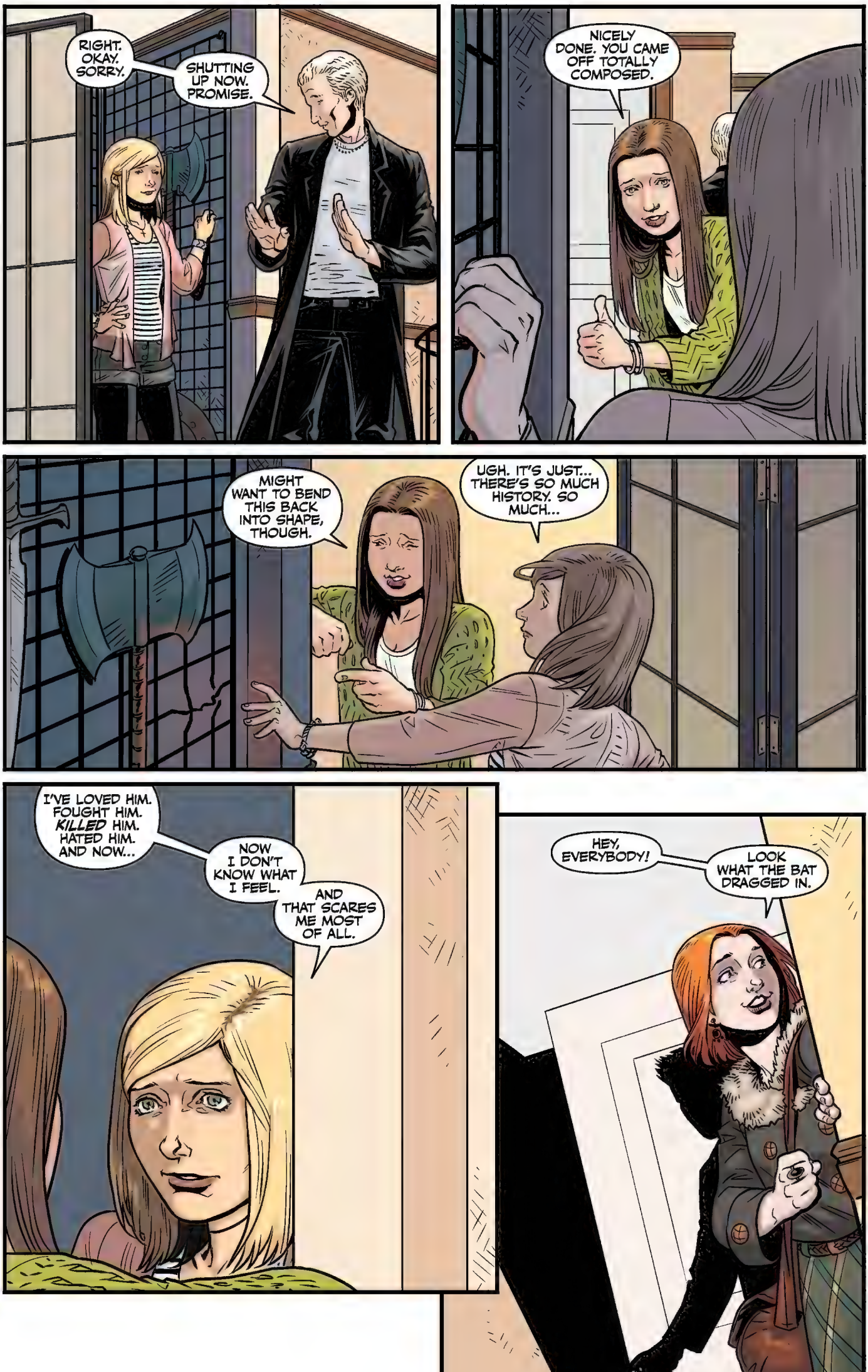
THE SLAYER AIN'T NO ONE'S, LITTLE BIT.
IF SHE WAS... WOULDN'T BE HER.

OLD DEMONS
PART ONE

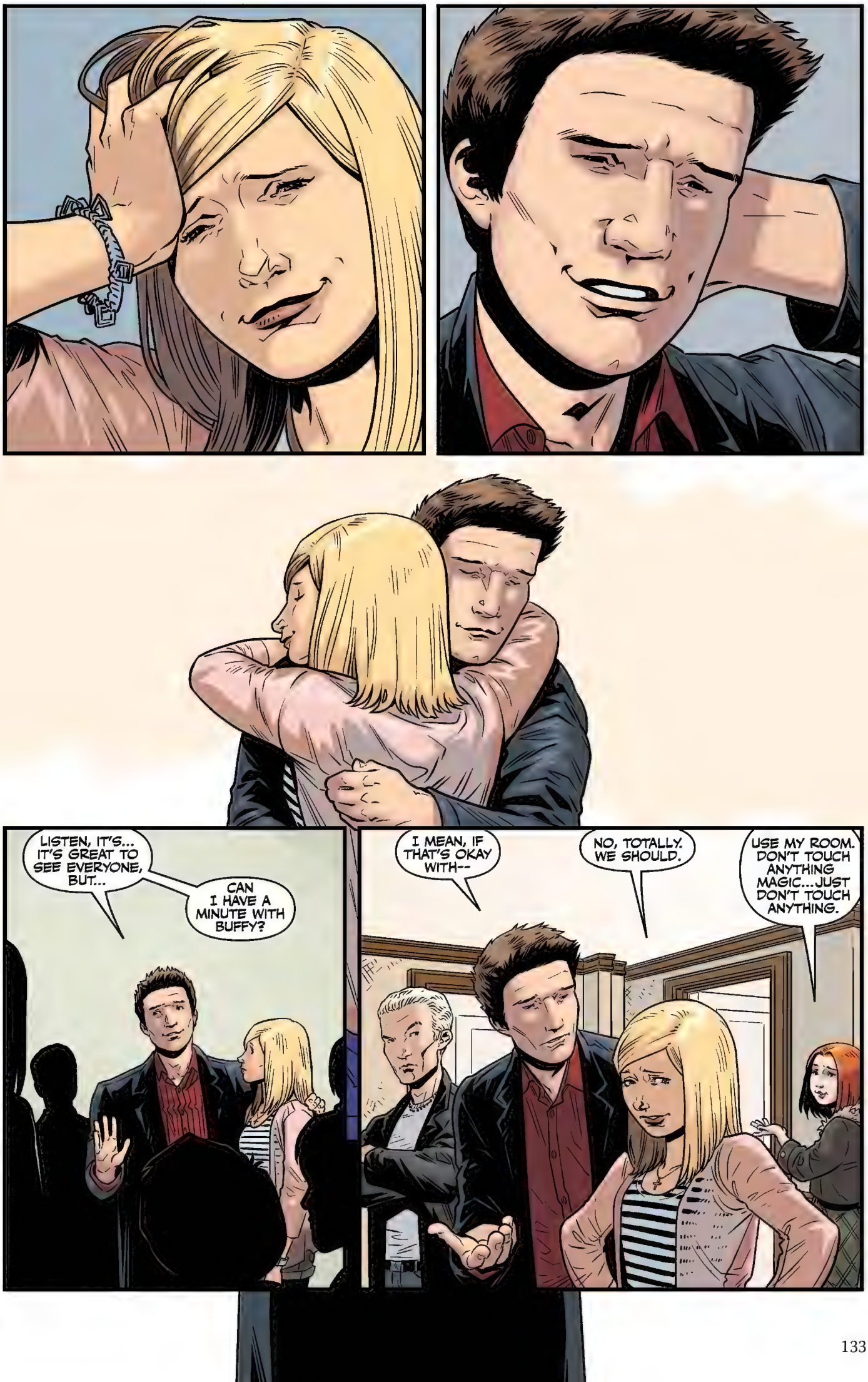

DAWN'S RIGHT. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. ME, ON THE OTHER HAND...
I'D FORGOTTEN. LAST TIME YOU SAW ANGEL'S RIDICULOUS FOREHEAD, YOU WERE PUNCHING IT.
XANDER? *YOU* BEAT UP ANGEL? I FIGURED IT WAS BUFFY.
NO, SEE, IT'S ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING. I WAS...
YEAH. THAT WAS KINDA THE START OF MY...PROBLEMS. THE ANGER ISSUES. I MEAN, THAT'S WHEN IT SPIRALED OUT OF CONTROL. GOT WORSE THAN I EVER LET ON TO YOU.
BUT IT HAD BEEN BUILDING EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. I REALIZED THAT AFTER TALKING TO DR. MIKE. I'D JUST KEPT IT DOWN. BUT YOU CAN ONLY BOTTLE IT UP SO LONG, BEFORE...
DR. MIKE?
SOME TOSSER SHRINK HE'S BEEN SEEING. THEY TALK ABOUT FEELINGS AND SIP CHAI LATTES AND HUG.
NO FEAR. ANGEL'S SO CATHOLIC HE PROBABLY ENJOYED THE THUMPING. FIGURE HE'LL GREET YOU WITH "THANK YOU, SIR, MAY I HAVE ANOTHER."
I SHOULD'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE. BUT I WAS...
WELL. NO REASON TO KEEP IT FROM YOU NOW, RIGHT?

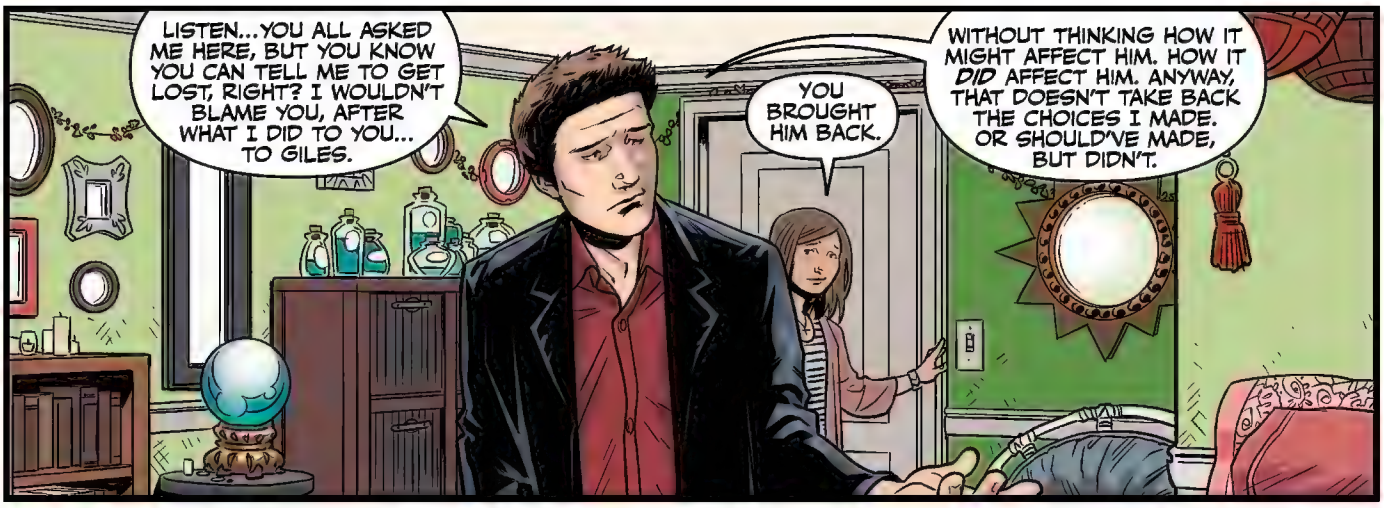

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS GOING ON. I WANTED TO HELP, BUT TRYING TO ASK ABOUT IT JUST SEEMED TO UPSET YOU. YOU CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT A RELIEF IT IS TO HEAR THIS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. NOW THAT WE'RE NOT TRYING TO BE TOGETHER ANYMORE, THINGS BETWEEN US ARE SO MUCH MORE HONEST.
YEAH. I WAS RIGHT.
YAY ME.
RIGHT. WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO WAIT FOR THE REAR GUARD. I'M GONNA GO OUT THERE AND TRACK THE BASTARD DOWN.
DON'T BE A FOOL. YOU WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE.
THEN WHAT GOOD IS ANGEL? I'VE HAD IT WITH WAITIN' AROUND FOR SOME WANKER TO COME RIDIN' IN LIKE THE CAVALRY WHEN THERE AIN'T A DAMN THING HE CAN DO THAT *I CAN'T*--
SPIKE.
GOT A MINUTE?

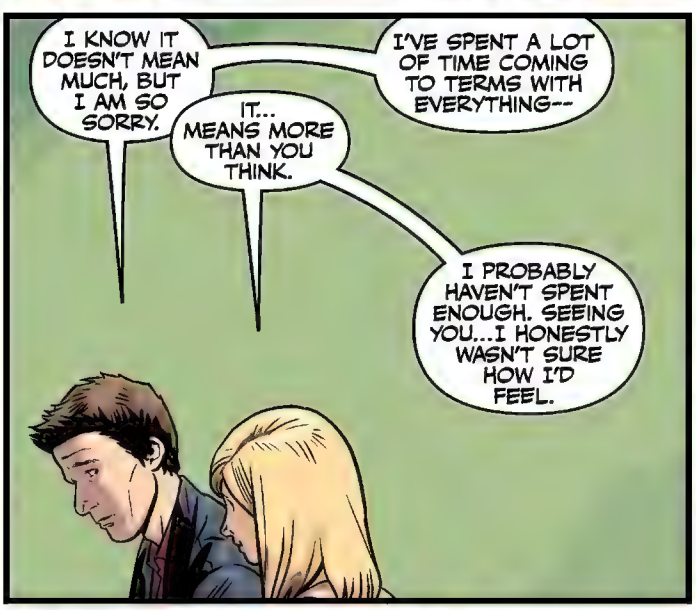

I KNOW. I'M ACTIN' LIKE A PRAT.
BUT THE HISTORY BETWEEN YOU TWO--THE LAST TIME YOU SAW EACH OTHER--
YEAH. A COSMIC FORCE THAT LET US FLY AND MOVE MOUNTAINS AND CHANGE THE COURSE OF TIDES WANTED US TOGETHER. TO BE THE PARENTS OF A NEW UNIVERSE.
FATE. DESTINY. ENOUGH MAGIC POWER TO CREATE WHOLE WORLDS. AND EVEN WITH ALL THAT...
I SAID *NO.* AND WALKED AWAY.
I... SUPPOSE YOU DID, AT THAT.
ANGEL'S PART OF MY PAST. WHO I AM NOW...
...*YOU'RE* PART OF THAT. HIM SHOWING UP ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING.
OKAY?

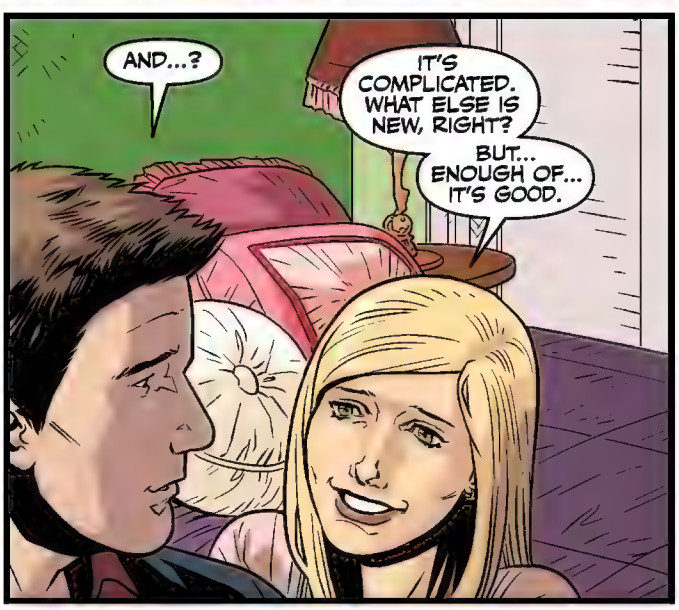

RIGHT. OKAY. SORRY.
SHUTTING UP NOW. PROMISE.
NICELY DONE. YOU CAME OFF TOTALLY COMPOSED.
MIGHT WANT TO BEND THIS BACK INTO SHAPE, THOUGH.
UGH. IT'S JUST... THERE'S SO MUCH HISTORY. SO MUCH...
I'VE LOVED HIM. FOUGHT HIM. KILLED HIM. HATED HIM. AND NOW...
NOW I DON'T KNOW WHAT I FEEL.
AND THAT SCARES ME MOST OF ALL.
HEY, EVERYBODY!
LOOK WHAT THE BAT DRAGGED IN.

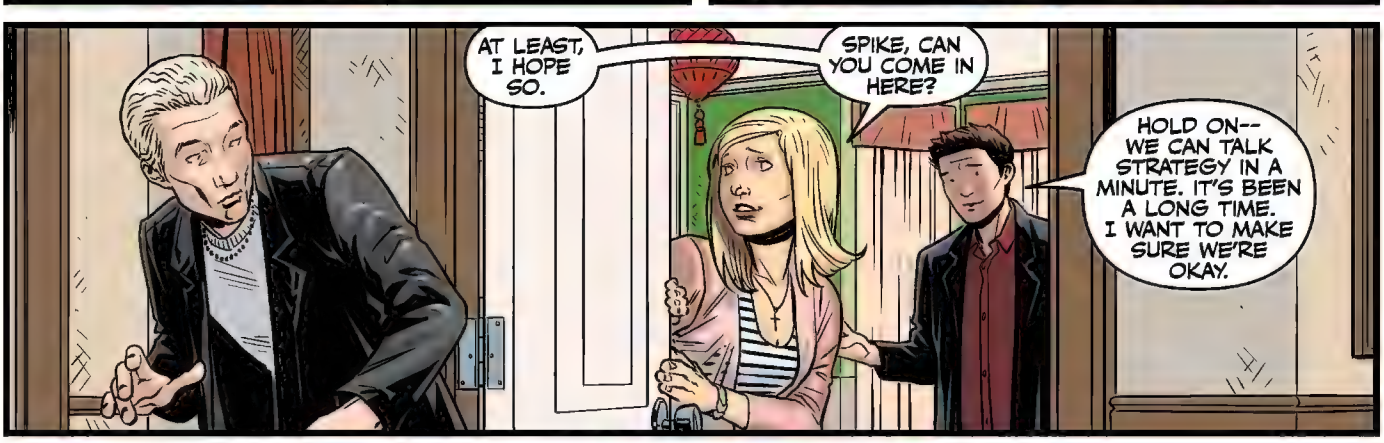
HI.
BUFFY.
IT'S GOOD TO--
OH.
OH.

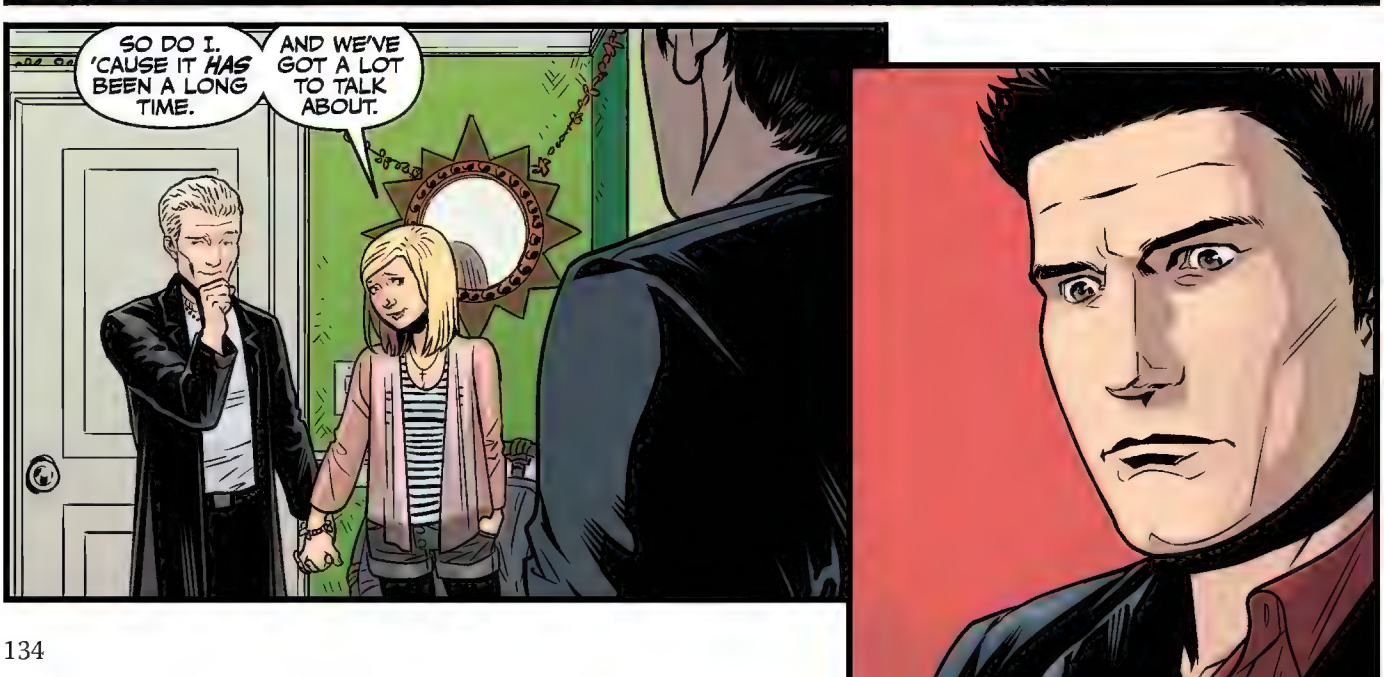

LISTEN, IT'S... IT'S GREAT TO SEE EVERYONE, BUT...
CAN I HAVE A MINUTE WITH BUFFY?
I MEAN, IF THAT'S OKAY WITH--
NO, TOTALLY. WE SHOULD.
USE MY ROOM. DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING MAGIC...JUST DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING.


LISTEN...YOU ALL ASKED ME HERE, BUT YOU KNOW YOU CAN TELL ME TO GET LOST, RIGHT? I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU, AFTER WHAT I DID TO YOU... TO GILES.
YOU BROUGHT HIM BACK.
WITHOUT THINKING HOW IT MIGHT AFFECT HIM. HOW IT *DID* AFFECT HIM. ANYWAY, THAT DOESN'T TAKE BACK THE CHOICES I MADE. OR SHOULD'VE MADE, BUT DIDN'T.


I KNOW IT DOESN'T MEAN MUCH, BUT I AM SO SORRY.
I'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME COMING TO TERMS WITH EVERYTHING--
IT... MEANS MORE THAN YOU THINK.
I PROBABLY HAVEN'T SPENT ENOUGH. SEEING YOU...I HONESTLY WASN'T SURE HOW I'D FEEL.


AND...?
IT'S COMPLICATED. WHAT ELSE IS NEW, RIGHT?
BUT... ENOUGH OF... IT'S GOOD.


AT LEAST, I HOPE SO.
SPIKE, CAN YOU COME IN HERE?
HOLD ON-- WE CAN TALK STRATEGY IN A MINUTE. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME. I WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE OKAY.


SO DO I. 'CAUSE IT *HAS* BEEN A LONG TIME.
AND WE'VE GOT A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.

SERIOUSLY? WE'RE ABOUT TO GO TO WAR. AND YOU BLINDSIDE ME WITH THIS, JUST TO SCORE SOME CHEAP POINTS--
HANG ON! I WANTED TO TELL YOU ON THE PHONE! GIVE YOU THE PLANE TRIP TO PROCESS IT, DIGNIFIED-LIKE.

BUT I SAID THAT SOME THINGS YOU DO FACE TO FACE. IT'S HOW MATURE PEOPLE HANDLE STUFF LIKE THIS.
YES, BECAUSE THIS CREW IS AN ENDLESS FONT OF MATURITY.
WELL, IF YOU NEVER EVEN TRY TO ACT LIKE IT--

Y'KNOW WHAT? IT DOESN'T MATTER.
IT'S FINE. WE'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.

ANGEL--

I SAID.
IT'S FINE.

AH, AND *FAITH?* HOW IS SHE?
WHEN YOU SAID ON THE PHONE SHE WASN'T COMING, I BEGAN THINKING ABOUT HOW WE PARTED, AND I FEAR PERHAPS I WAS... INSENSITIVE.
SHE'S GREAT. THINGS ARE JUST KINDA CRAZY OVER THERE...MAGIC TOWN, YOU KNOW.
SHE SENDS HER BEST. EVERYTHING'S... GOOD. REAL GOOD.
YES.
CLEARLY.

HEY! SO! SPIKE'S BEEN HAVING THESE DREAMS WHERE HE KILLS PEOPLE!
UH, BUT IT WASN'T HIM. IT WAS THIS DEMON LORD, ARCHAEUS, DOING THE KILLING. AND SPIKE SAW IT BECAUSE OF THE LINK BETWEEN THEM.
LIKE HE TOLD YOU, HE FIGURES YOU HAVE THE LINK TOO, 'CAUSE YOU'RE BOTH PART OF HIS FAMILY TREE AND ALL...SO, UM, ANY MURDER DREAMS ON YOUR END?
YEAH. BUT I DID SOME DIGGING, AND IT'S MORE DELIBERATE THAN YOU MAKE IT SOUND.
ARCHAEUS SPECIFICALLY KILLED NUNS. WHICH WAS MY--ANGELUS'S SPECIALTY. HE WANTED ME TO THINK I WAS LOSING IT...TO DOUBT MYSELF.
BEEN THINKIN' ON IT. RECKON WE'RE THE ONLY TWO OF HIS "CHILDREN" WITH SOULS. ONLY ONES WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESIST HIS CONTROL. SO HE CAME AFTER US FIRST.
WEAR US DOWN. MAKE US EASIER PREY. TURN US INTO MINIONS BEFORE WE KNOW WHICH WAY'S UP. 'CAUSE NOW THAT WE DO...
WE CAN FIGHT IT--ESPECIALLY IF WE'RE TOGETHER. MAYBE EVEN TURN THE LINK AGAINST HIM. THE BIG QUESTION IS, WHAT'S HE AFTER?
LET'S FIND HIM AND ASK. WITH SHARP IMPLEMENTS. NOTHING STOPPING US NOW THAT IT'S DARK.
ACTUALLY, THE MORE RELEVANT QUESTION MAY BE WHETHER BY SEEKING HIM OUT, THE TWO OF YOU ARE GIVING HIM PRECISELY WHAT HE WANTS. WALKING INTO A TRAP.
PERHAPS THE REST OF US SHOULD SEEK ARCHAEUS, WHILE SPIKE AND ANGEL REMAIN HERE, TOGETHER--
NO.
HELL NO.

WILLOW TOLD ME ARCHAEUS BURST UP THROUGH THE FLOOR...OUT OF WHAT, A BASEMENT? A TUNNEL?
THERE'S A NETWORK OF STORM DRAINS. RUNS UNDER MOST OF THE CITY.
I USE 'EM MYSELF AT TIMES, TO GET AROUND DURING THE DAY.
BUT THEY GO FOR MILES. IT'D TAKE FOREVER TO COVER THEM ALL. AND FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL, HE DOESN'T HAVE JUST ONE H.Q.
MAYBE WE SHOULD THINK ABOUT--
CRASH
WHSSS
HSSSS!
EXIT
DOWN!
SSSTHNK

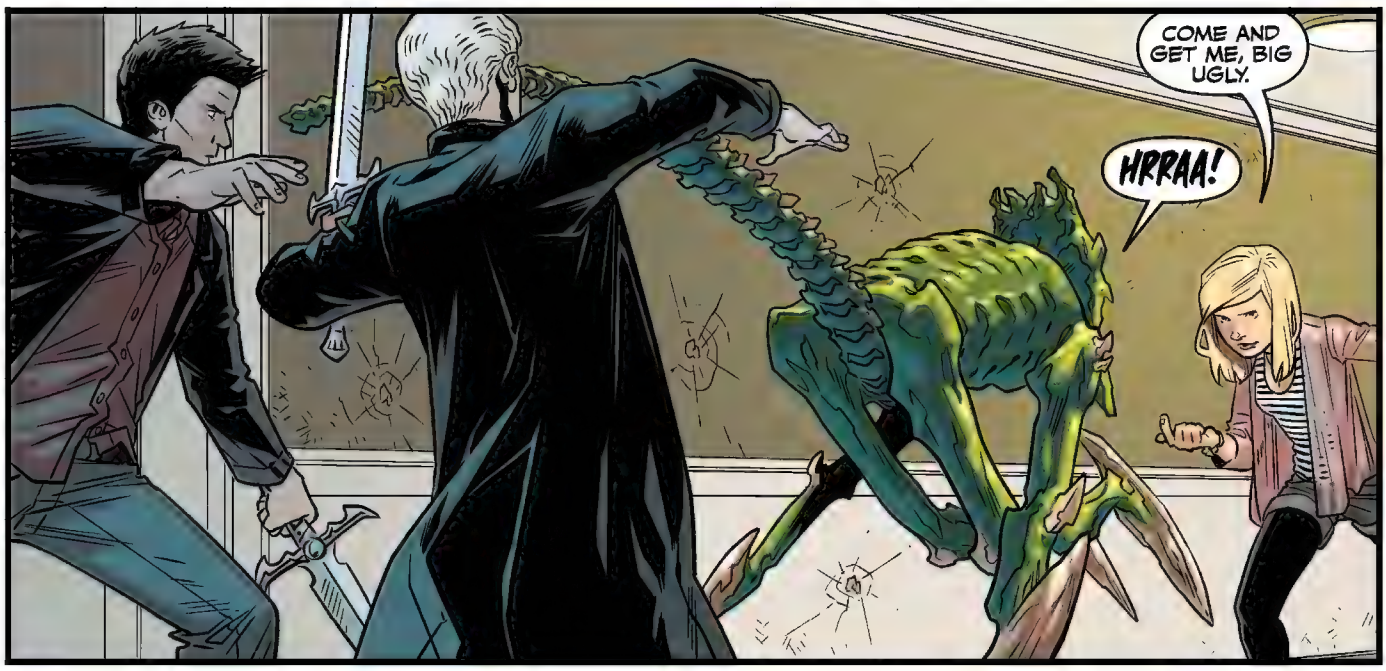
BURN, YOU--
FASSH
SHWICK
AGH!
WIL!
SHE'S BEEN POISONED!
I KNOW AN ANTIVENOM SPELL, BUT I'LL NEED TIME!

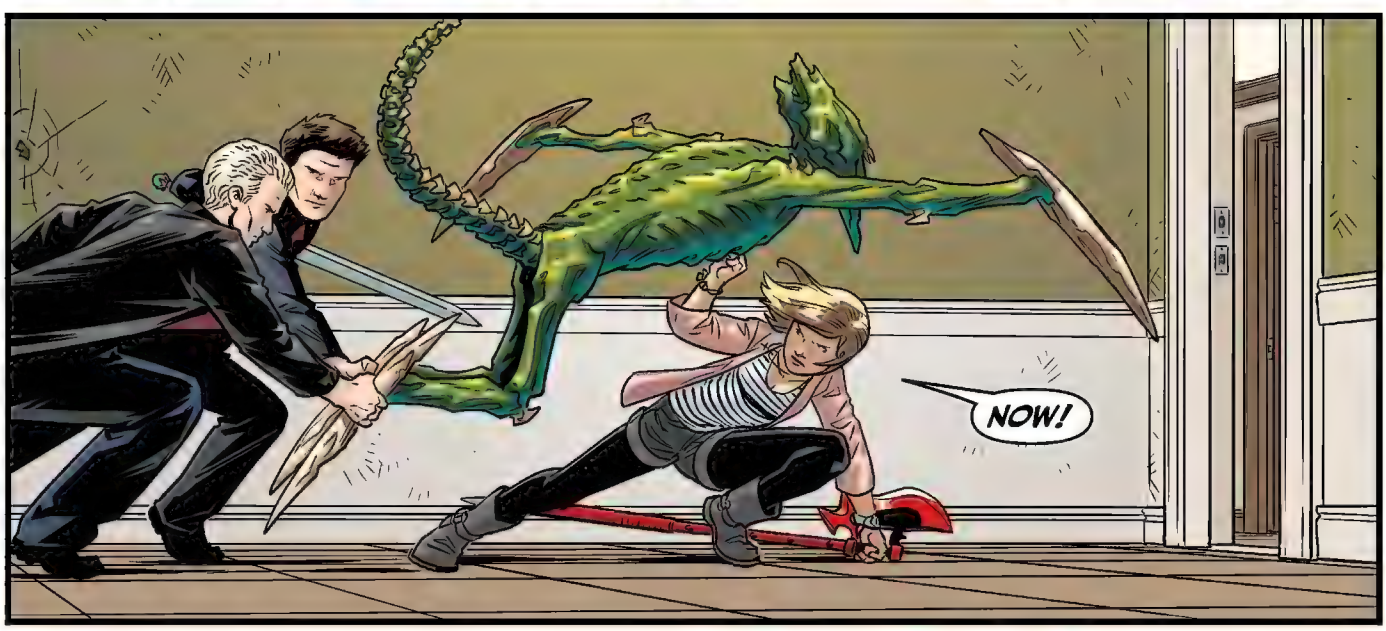
YOU GOT IT.
HSSAAHH!
SHKK
SQT
SQT
SQT
SQT
HNH!
AGH!
GILES! PULL WILLOW INTO MY PLACE!
SHE CAST PROTECTIVE SPELLS OVER OUR APARTMENTS! THE DEMON CAN'T GET IN!

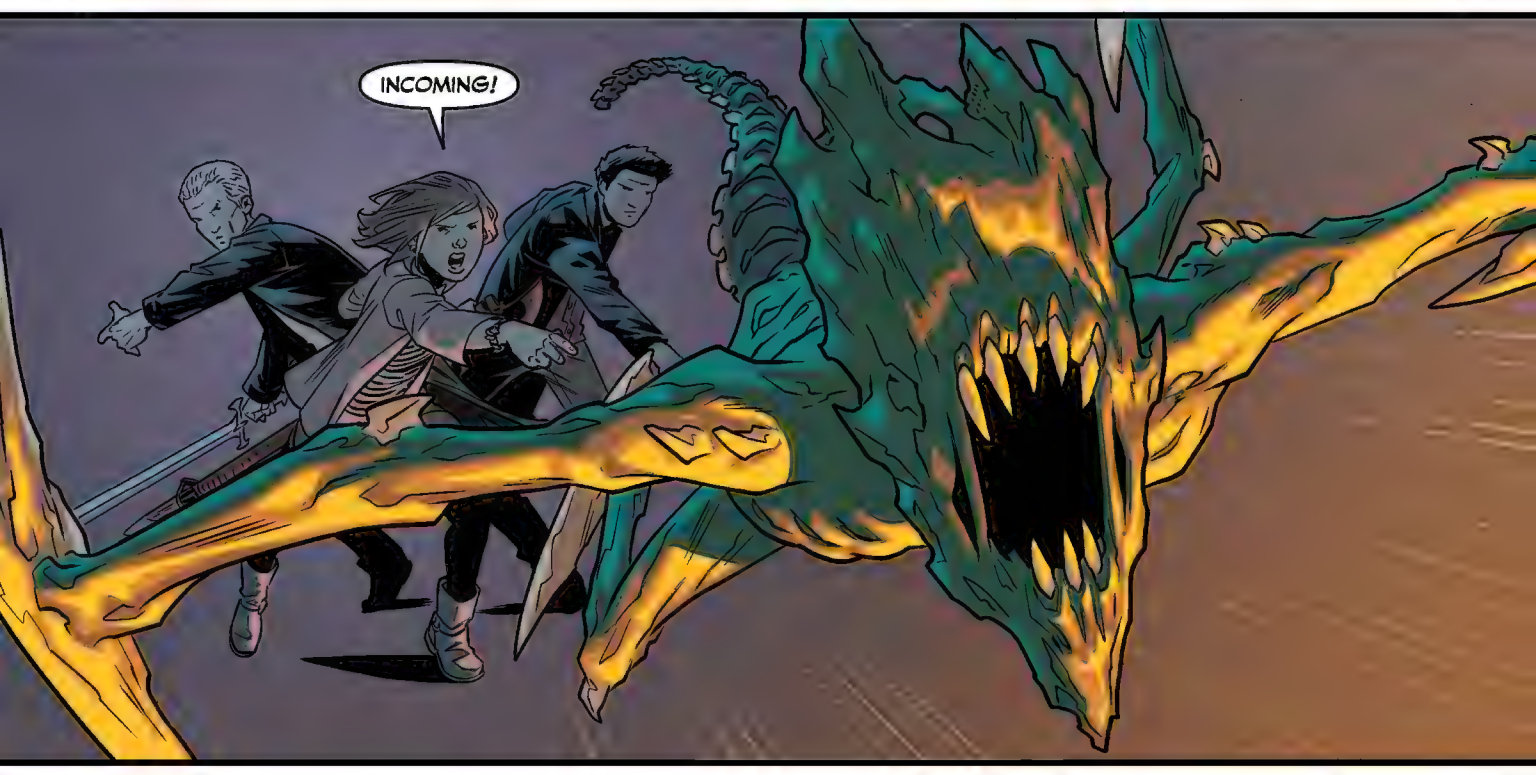
OF COURSE!
LET'S GIVE 'EM COVER.
HELL WITH THAT...
...LET'S RIP THE BUGGER TO SHREDS.
IT'S COVERED WITH THIS BONY STUFF! LIKE HACKING AT A WALL!
MAYBE IF WE ALL HIT THE SAME SPOT--
WHOMP
UNGH!

GET BEHIND ME--
I GOT THIS--
SHRATCH
BLOODY HELL! I KNOW YOU TWO CAN FIGHT TOGETHER WITHOUT TRIPPIN' OVER EACH OTHER!
SORRY. RUST.
ME TOO. BUT IT'S TIME...

...TO SHAKE IT OFF.
CHRII!
IT'LL TAKE FOREVER TO KILL THIS THING.
GOT AN IDEA. PROTECTIVE SPELLS ON THE APARTMENTS, RIGHT? NO ONE GETS IN UNLESS INVITED, ESPECIALLY IF THEY'RE OF THE DEMON PERSUASION.
EXACTLY WHAT I'M THINKING.
XANDER! DAWN! CLEAR THE DOOR AND GET READY!

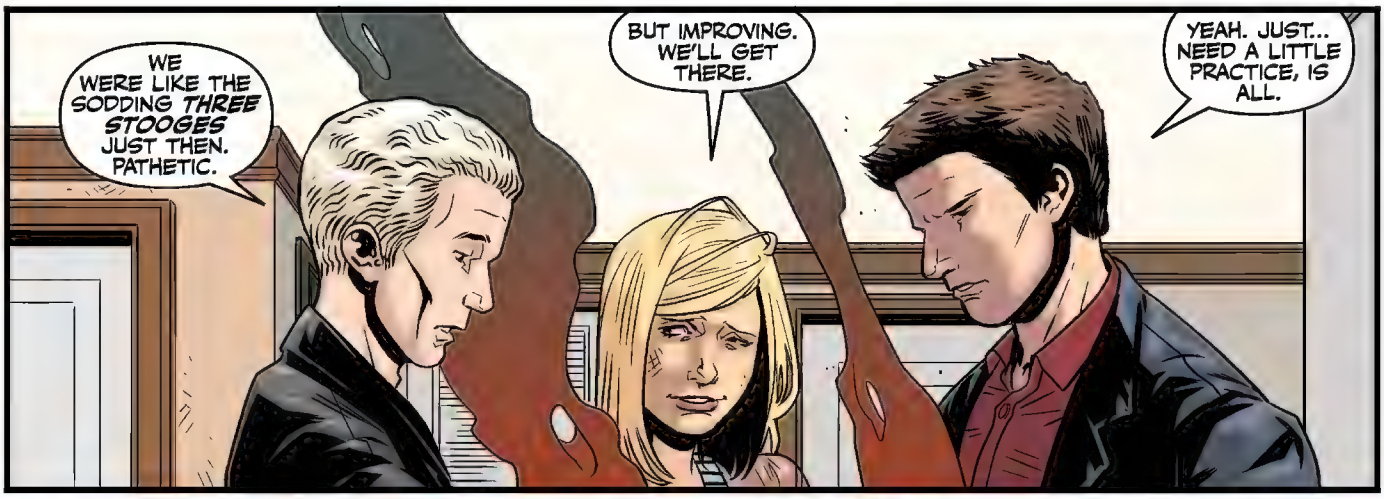

COME AND GET ME, BIG UGLY.
HRRAA!


NOW!

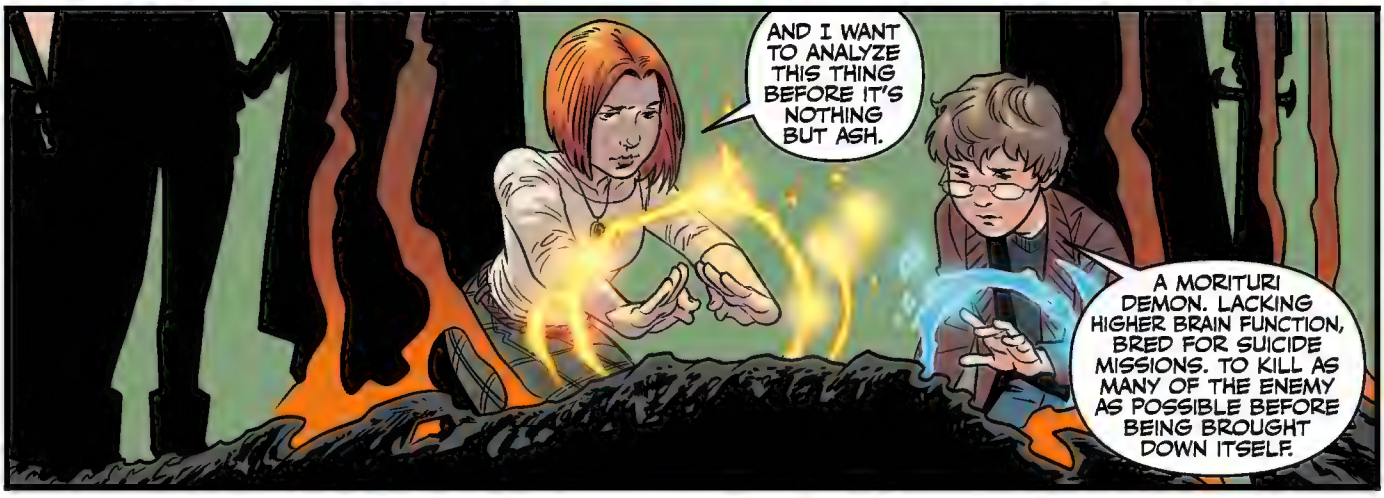

INCOMING!

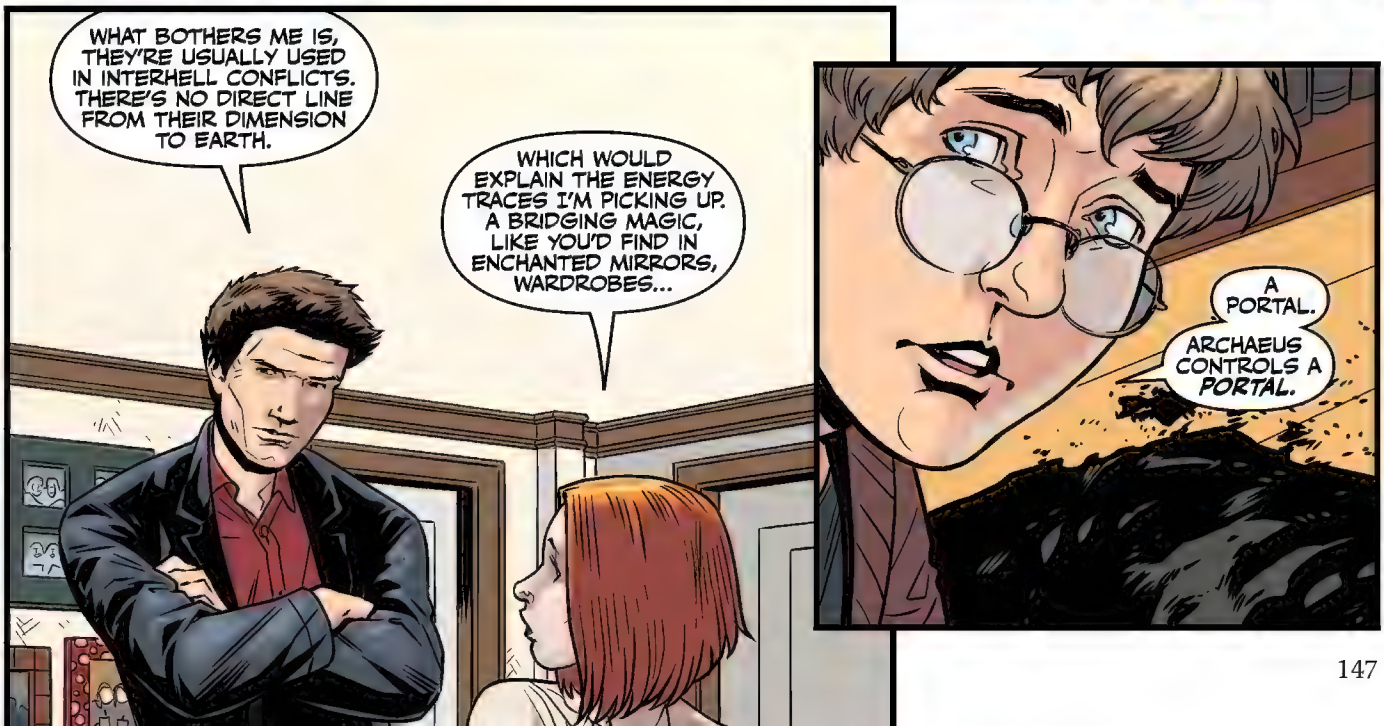
FWOOSH
AND THE PROTECTIVE SPELL IS PROTECTIVE!
CAREFUL...
...IT'S NOT OVER YET.
MMRRAAA
TUNGG
SURE IT IS.
HE JUST HASN'T FIGURED IT OUT YET.
LUCKY WE'RE IN AN EDUCATING MOOD.

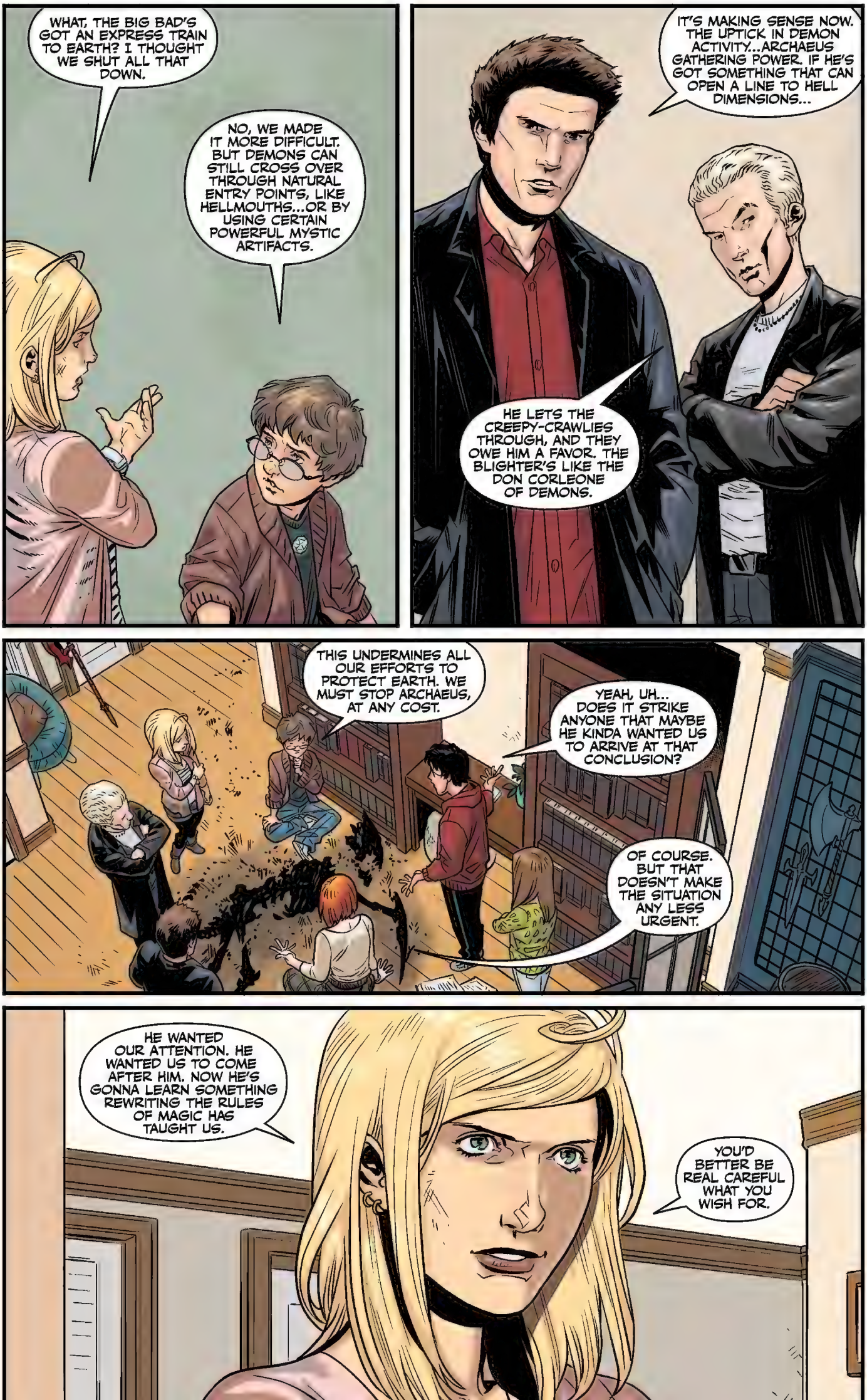
SHNK
WHHSSS
EWW.
CHOP

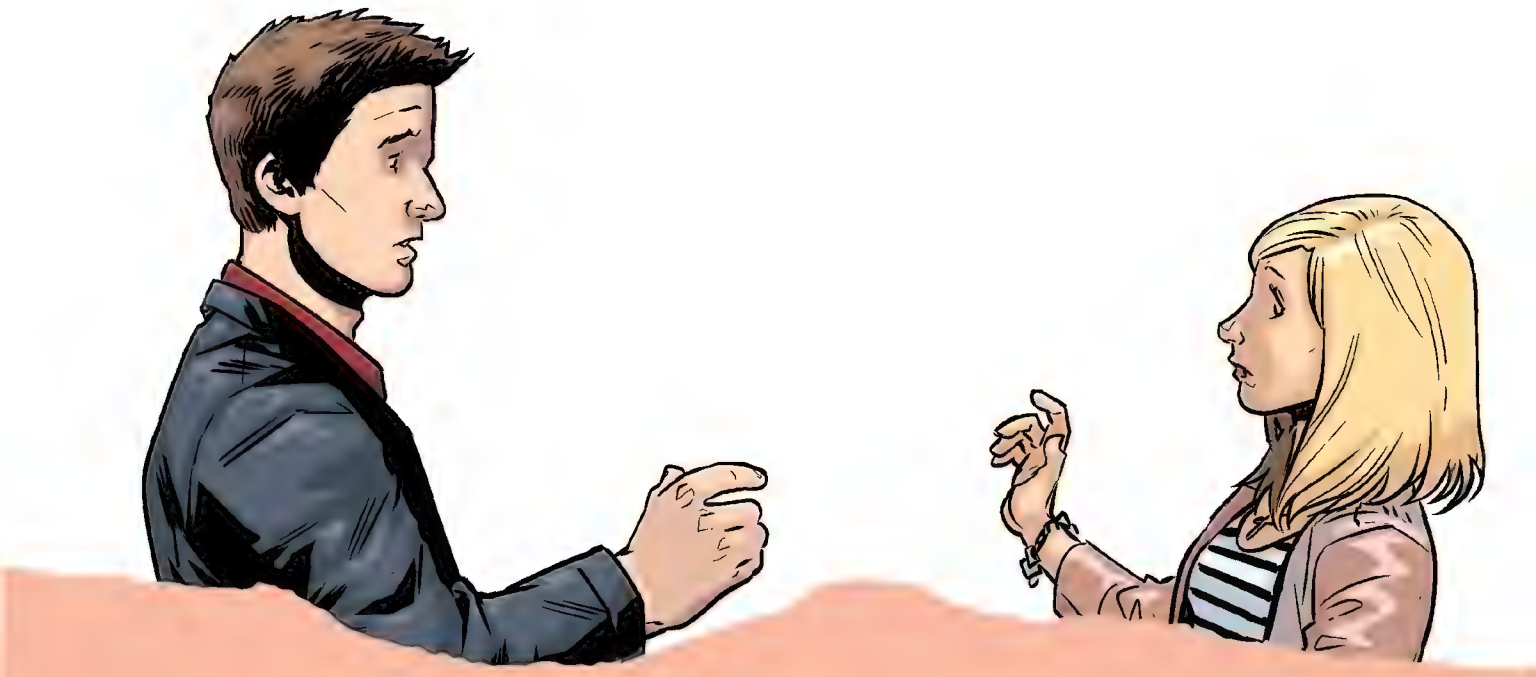

WE WERE LIKE THE SODDING *THREE STOOGES* JUST THEN. PATHETIC.
BUT IMPROVING. WE'LL GET THERE.
YEAH. JUST... NEED A LITTLE PRACTICE, IS ALL.

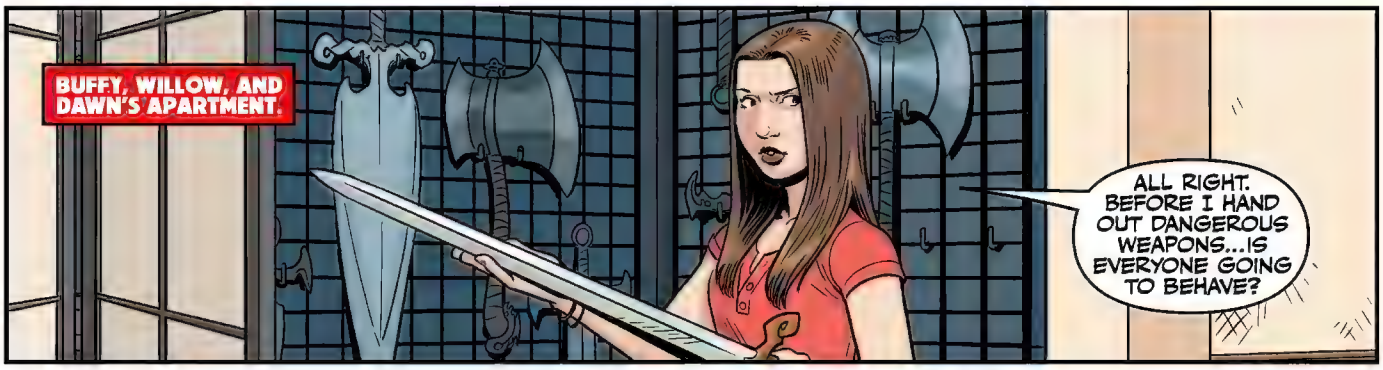
WELL, YOU'RE GONNA GET IT.
WILLOW! LIE DOWN-- YOU LOOK LIKE CRAP!
I'M OKAY. THE ANTIVENOM SPELL WORKED.


AND I WANT TO ANALYZE THIS THING BEFORE IT'S NOTHING BUT ASH.
A MORITURI DEMON. LACKING HIGHER BRAIN FUNCTION, BRED FOR SUICIDE MISSIONS. TO KILL AS MANY OF THE ENEMY AS POSSIBLE BEFORE BEING BROUGHT DOWN ITSELF.

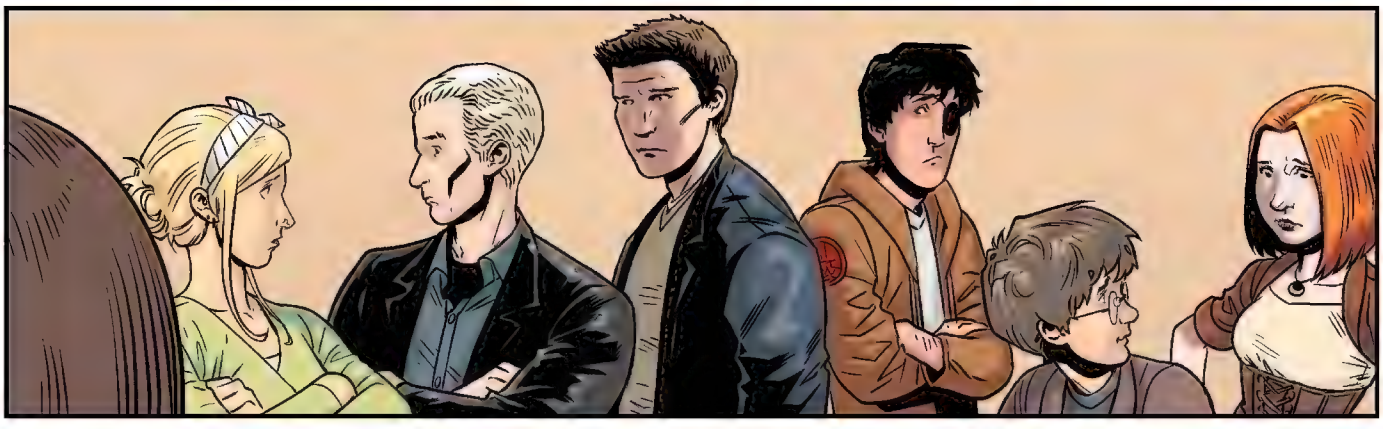

WHAT BOTHERS ME IS, THEY'RE USUALLY USED IN INTERHELL CONFLICTS. THERE'S NO DIRECT LINE FROM THEIR DIMENSION TO EARTH.
WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN THE ENERGY TRACES I'M PICKING UP. A BRIDGING MAGIC, LIKE YOU'D FIND IN ENCHANTED MIRRORS, WARDROBES...
A PORTAL.
ARCHAEUS CONTROLS A *PORTAL.*

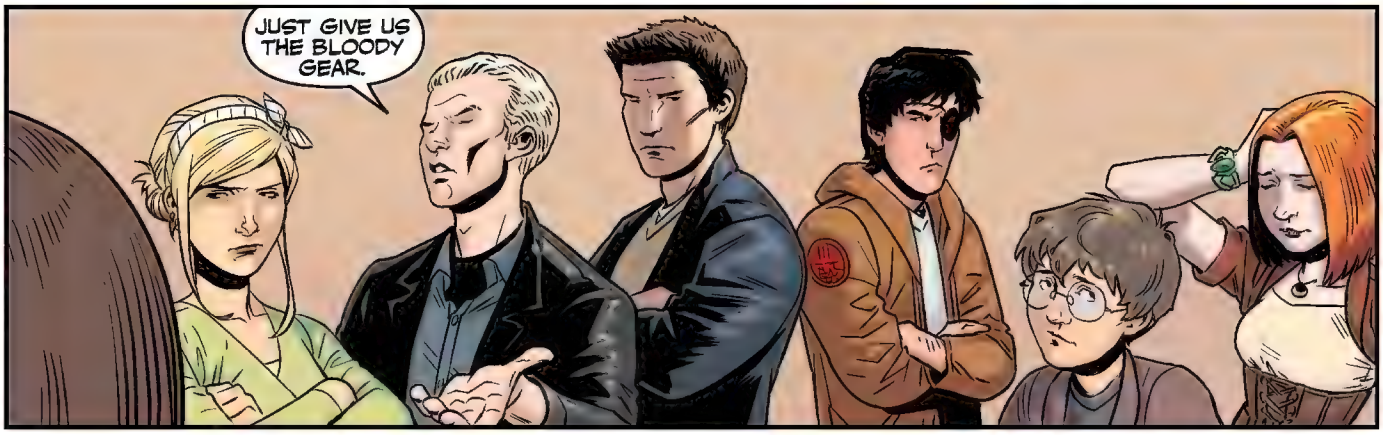

WHAT, THE BIG BAD'S GOT AN EXPRESS TRAIN TO EARTH? I THOUGHT WE SHUT ALL THAT DOWN.
NO, WE MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT. BUT DEMONS CAN STILL CROSS OVER THROUGH NATURAL ENTRY POINTS, LIKE HELLMOUTHS...OR BY USING CERTAIN POWERFUL MYSTIC ARTIFACTS.
IT'S MAKING SENSE NOW. THE UPTICK IN DEMON ACTIVITY...ARCHAEUS GATHERING POWER. IF HE'S GOT SOMETHING THAT CAN OPEN A LINE TO HELL DIMENSIONS...
HE LETS THE CREEPY-CRAWLIES THROUGH, AND THEY OWE HIM A FAVOR. THE BLIGHTER'S LIKE THE DON CORLEONE OF DEMONS.
THIS UNDERMINES ALL OUR EFFORTS TO PROTECT EARTH. WE MUST STOP ARCHAEUS, AT ANY COST.
YEAH, UH... DOES IT STRIKE ANYONE THAT MAYBE HE KINDA WANTED US TO ARRIVE AT THAT CONCLUSION?
OF COURSE. BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE THE SITUATION ANY LESS URGENT.
HE WANTED OUR ATTENTION. HE WANTED US TO COME AFTER HIM. NOW HE'S GONNA LEARN SOMETHING REWRITING THE RULES OF MAGIC HAS TAUGHT US.
YOU'D BETTER BE REAL CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

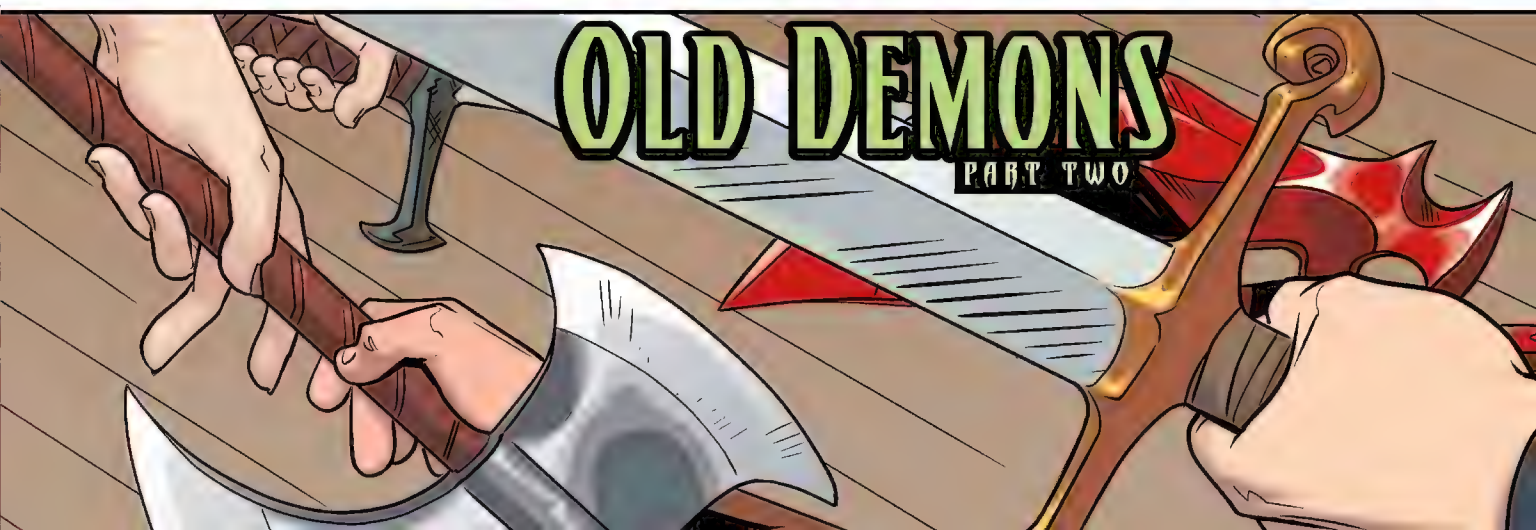



BUFFY, WILLOW, AND DAWN'S APARTMENT.
ALL RIGHT. BEFORE I HAND OUT DANGEROUS WEAPONS...IS EVERYONE GOING TO BEHAVE?

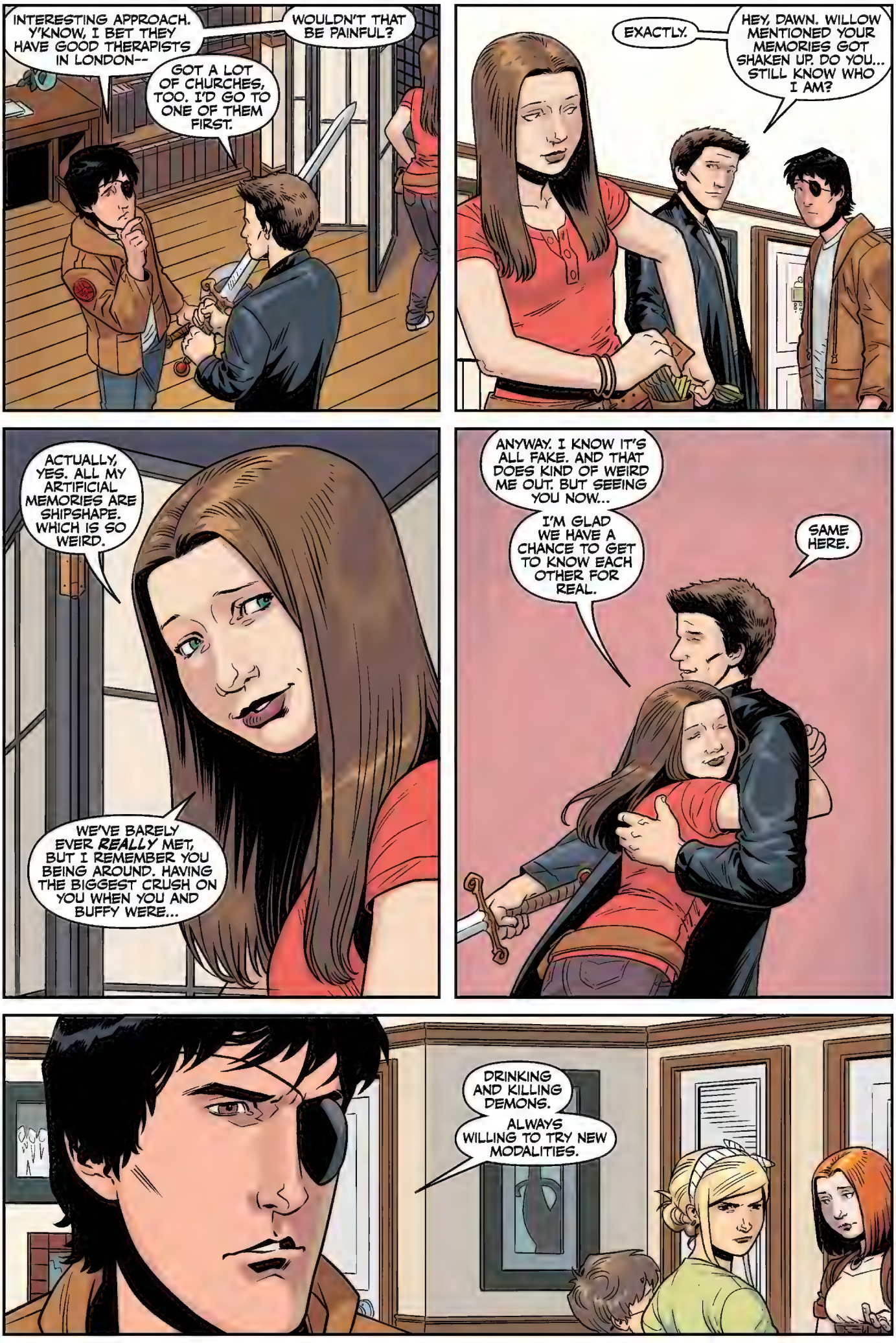
WHAT KIND OF A QUESTION IS THAT?
YES, DAWN, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. YOU ACT AS IF WE HAVE A HABIT OF FIGHTING EACH OTHER--

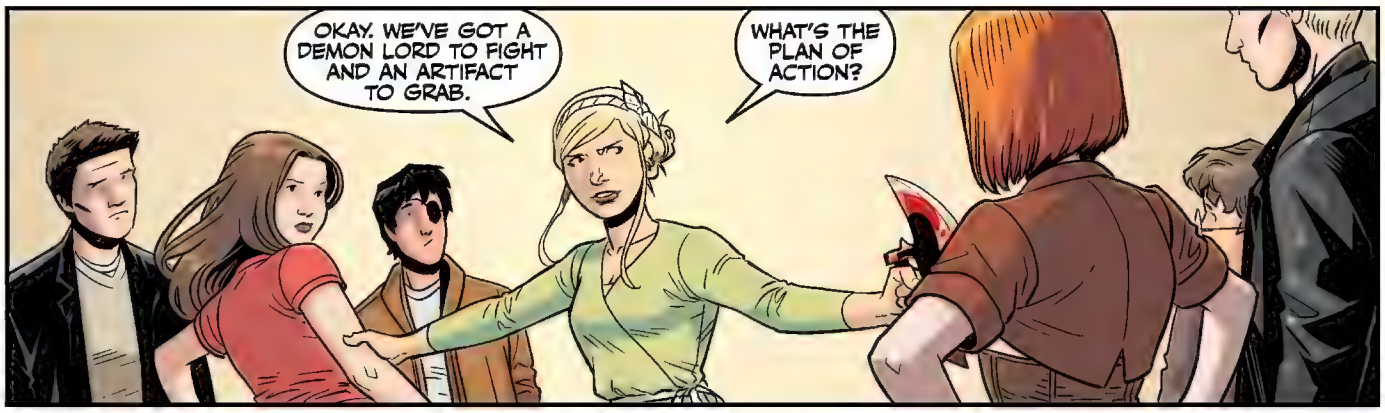


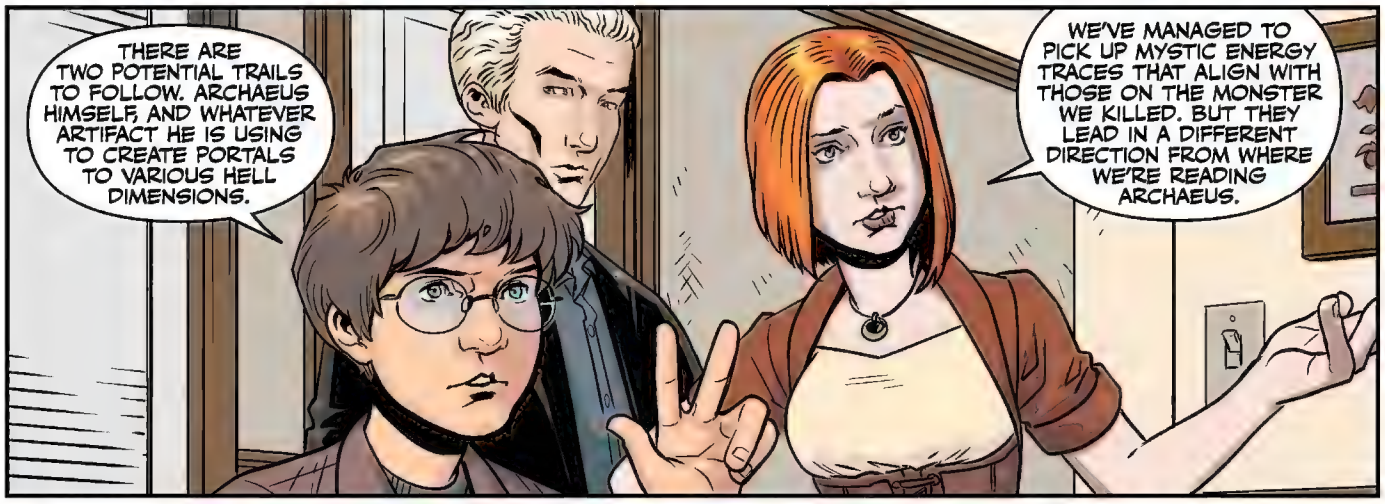

JUST GIVE US THE BLOODY GEAR.

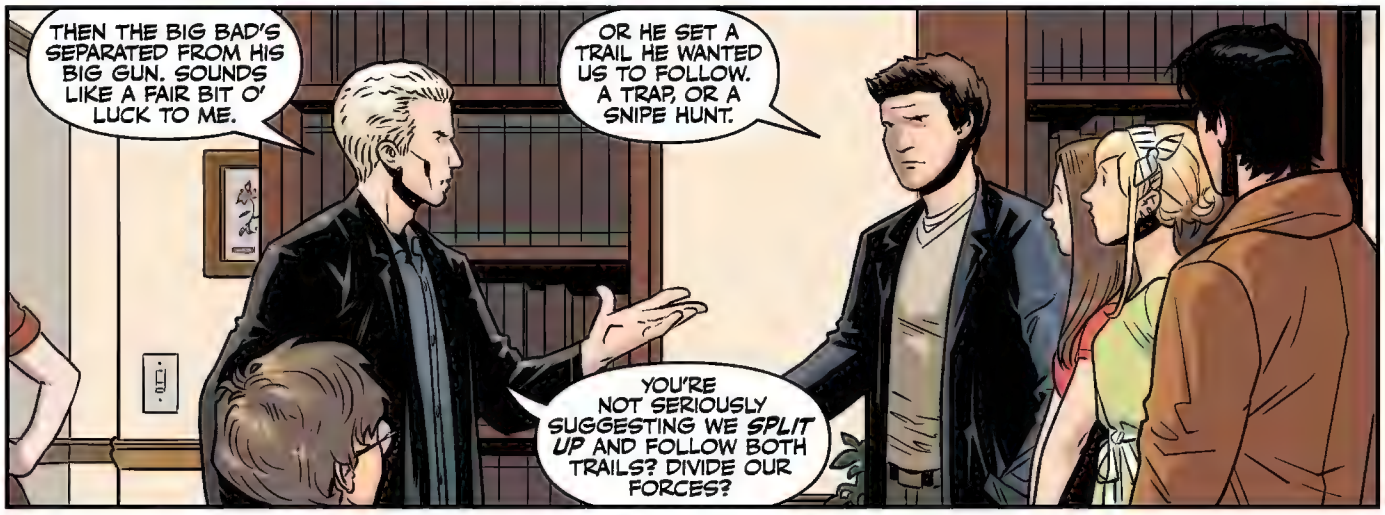

OLD DEMONS
PART TWO

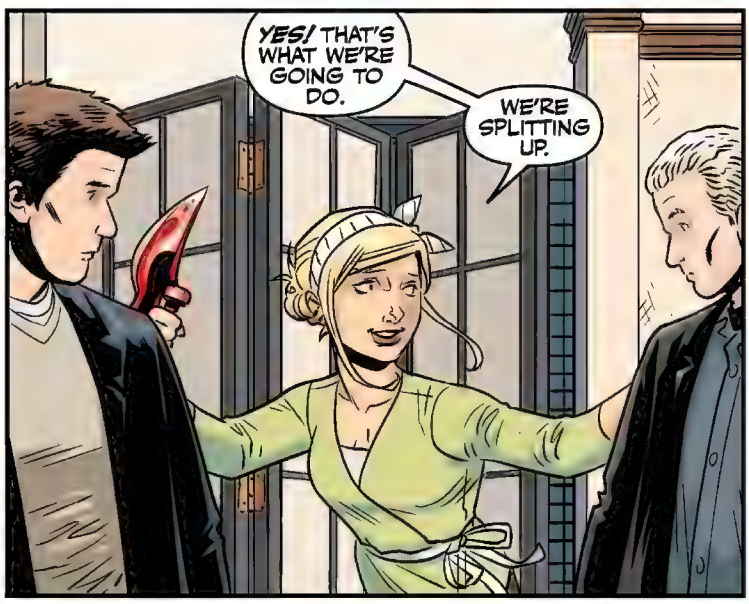
SURE YOU DON'T WANT A DISTANCE WEAPON?
ONE EYE. MAKES IT HARD TO AIM.
WELL, HIT AND MOVE. ARCHAEUS AND HIS MINIONS WON'T JUST SIT THERE AND TAKE IT.
LISTEN, ANGEL...WHEN I, Y'KNOW, BEAT YOU UP...WELL, SORRY. EVEN THOUGH YOU KINDA DESERVED IT.
I'VE BEEN GOING TO THERAPY FOR MY ANGER ISSUES. LOOKING AT THINGS WITH MORE CLARITY. I KNOW KILLING GILES WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
IN A LOT OF WAYS IT WAS. AND I AGREE I DESERVED IT.
OR YOU'D BE MISSING LIMBS.
COPY THAT.
I'D, UH, IMAGINE YOU'VE HAD SOME REPRESSED ANGER OVER THE CENTURIES. HOW'D YOU DEAL WITH IT?
I DRANK. THEN I KILLED PEOPLE. A *LOT* OF PEOPLE.
NOW I KILL DEMONS.
AND SOMETIMES DRINK.


INTERESTING APPROACH. Y'KNOW, I BET THEY HAVE GOOD THERAPISTS IN LONDON--
WOULDN'T THAT BE PAINFUL?
GOT A LOT OF CHURCHES, TOO. I'D GO TO ONE OF THEM FIRST.
EXACTLY.
HEY, DAWN. WILLOW MENTIONED YOUR MEMORIES GOT SHAKEN UP. DO YOU... STILL KNOW WHO I AM?
ACTUALLY, YES. ALL MY ARTIFICIAL MEMORIES ARE SHIPSHAPE. WHICH IS SO WEIRD.
WE'VE BARELY EVER *REALLY* MET, BUT I REMEMBER YOU BEING AROUND. HAVING THE BIGGEST CRUSH ON YOU WHEN YOU AND BUFFY WERE...
ANYWAY. I KNOW IT'S ALL FAKE. AND THAT DOES KIND OF WEIRD ME OUT. BUT SEEING YOU NOW...
I'M GLAD WE HAVE A CHANCE TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER FOR REAL.
SAME HERE.
DRINKING AND KILLING DEMONS.
ALWAYS WILLING TO TRY NEW MODALITIES.


OKAY. WE'VE GOT A DEMON LORD TO FIGHT AND AN ARTIFACT TO GRAB.
WHAT'S THE PLAN OF ACTION?


THERE ARE TWO POTENTIAL TRAILS TO FOLLOW. ARCHAEUS HIMSELF, AND WHATEVER ARTIFACT HE IS USING TO CREATE PORTALS TO VARIOUS HELL DIMENSIONS.
WE'VE MANAGED TO PICK UP MYSTIC ENERGY TRACES THAT ALIGN WITH THOSE ON THE MONSTER WE KILLED. BUT THEY LEAD IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION FROM WHERE WE'RE READING ARCHAEUS.

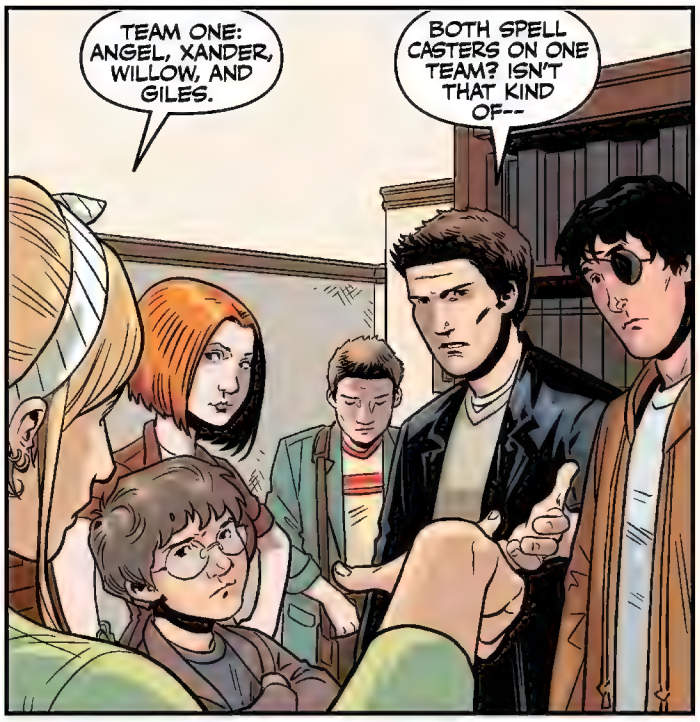

THEN THE BIG BAD'S SEPARATED FROM HIS BIG GUN. SOUNDS LIKE A FAIR BIT O' LUCK TO ME.
OR HE SET A TRAIL HE WANTED US TO FOLLOW. A TRAP, OR A SNIPE HUNT.
YOU'RE NOT SERIOUSLY SUGGESTING WE *SPLIT UP* AND FOLLOW BOTH TRAILS? DIVIDE OUR FORCES?


YES! THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO.
WE'RE SPLITTING UP.

UM, INTO TEAMS.
AND WE'RE GONNA DO IT SMART. EQUAL FIREPOWER ON BOTH. WE STAY IN CONSTANT CONTACT, AND WHOEVER HITS PAY DIRT FIRST CALLS THE OTHERS.
THEN WE MEET UP AND ALL GO TO TOWN. BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, AM I RIGHT?

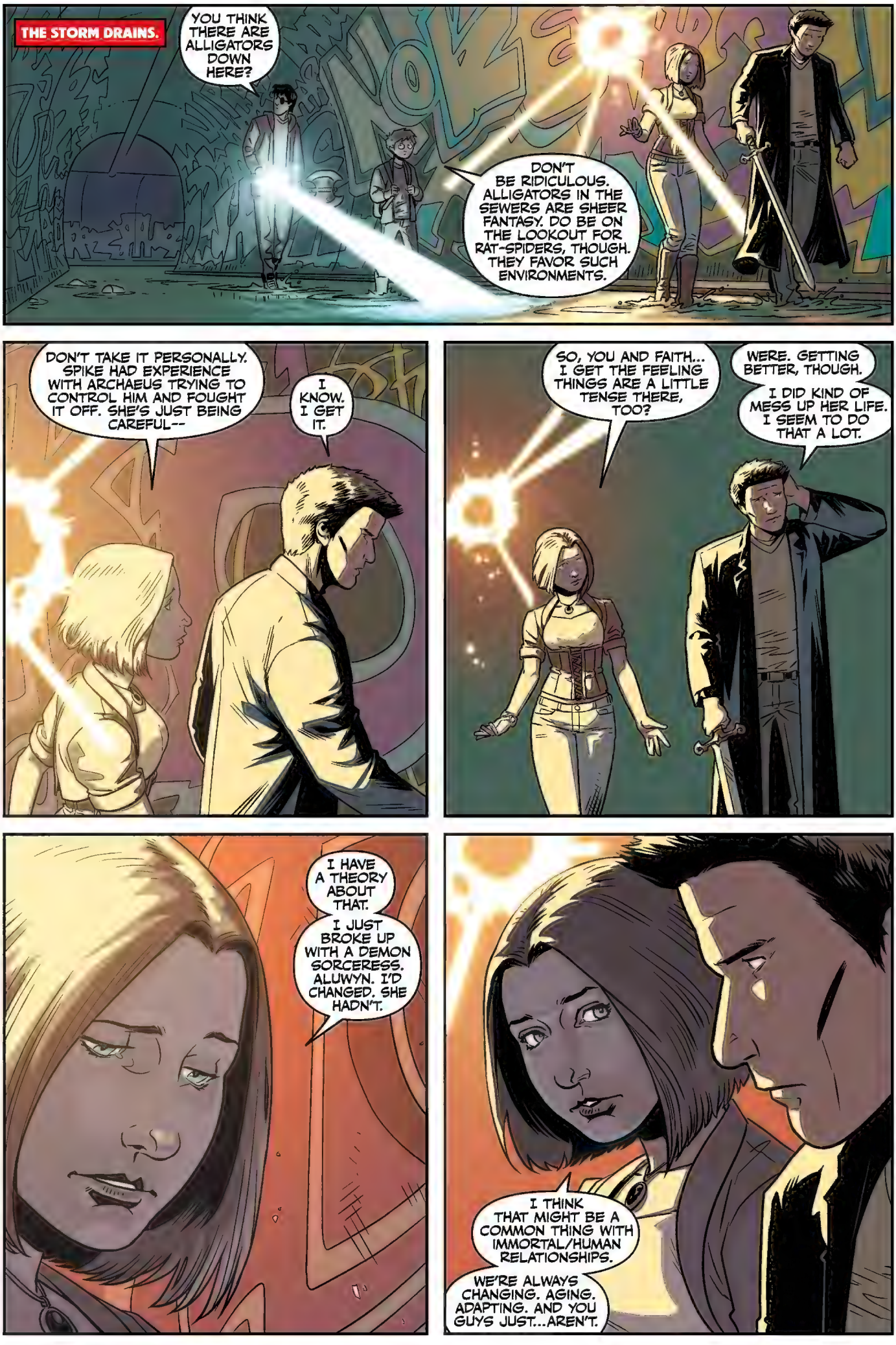
I SUPPOSE...TIME *IS* OF THE ESSENCE. BUT ARCHAEUS IS A SPELL CASTER, WITH THE POWER TO JAM MAGICAL COMMUNICATION, IF HE WISHES.
AND I DOUBT CELL PHONE SIGNALS PENETRATE SUBTERRANEAN STORM DRAINS. SOMETIMES I BARELY GET ONE ON THE B.A.R.T.
PROBLEM SOLVED! WITH BANANA-TALKIES, AS SO MANY PROBLEMS ARE.
THESE ARE FROM MY SUPERVILLAIN DAYS. WARREN AND JONATHAN AND I USED THEM IN THE TUNNELS UNDER SUNNYDALE. THEY'LL WORK EVEN THROUGH TONS OF ROCK.
DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU GUYS YOU COULD HAVE JUST GOTTEN RICH SELLING ALL YOUR INVENTIONS?
PSSH. WE STOLE ALL THE PLANS FROM HACKED GOVERNMENT FILES. THE STUFF THEY KEEP FROM US, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.
HEY, ANGEL. DON'T KNOW IF YOU HEARD THE NEWS: PROUD GAY MAN HERE. THAT'S RIGHT-- *I'M OUT.*
YOU WERE IN?

DID EVERYONE KNOW BUT ME?
YES. OKAY, HERE'S HOW IT BREAKS DOWN.


TEAM ONE: ANGEL, XANDER, WILLOW, AND GILES.
BOTH SPELL CASTERS ON ONE TEAM? ISN'T THAT KIND OF--

I DON'T WANNA SPLIT UP OUR MAGIC DUDES. WHETHER YOU FIND THE ARTIFACT OR THE BIG BAD, IT'LL TAKE ALL THE MOJO WE'VE GOT TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION.
SO THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU NOT TRUSTING ME. WANTING ME AROUND PEOPLE WHO CAN TAKE ME DOWN IF I LOSE CONTROL.

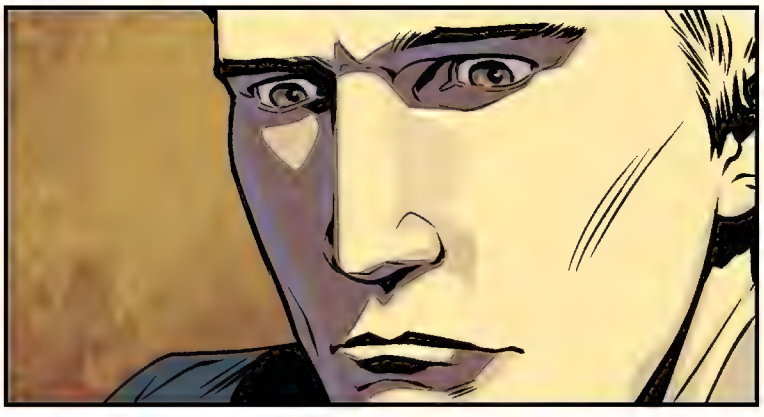
DID THAT ENTER INTO MY THINKING? YEAH.
YOU TELLING ME I'M WRONG?
LET'S JUST GO.


THE STORM DRAINS.
YOU THINK THERE ARE ALLIGATORS DOWN HERE?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. ALLIGATORS IN THE SEWERS ARE SHEER FANTASY. DO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR RAT-SPIDERS, THOUGH. THEY FAVOR SUCH ENVIRONMENTS.
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. SPIKE HAD EXPERIENCE WITH ARCHAEUS TRYING TO CONTROL HIM AND FOUGHT IT OFF. SHE'S JUST BEING CAREFUL--
I KNOW. I GET IT.
SO, YOU AND FAITH... I GET THE FEELING THINGS ARE A LITTLE TENSE THERE, TOO?
WERE. GETTING BETTER, THOUGH.
I DID KIND OF MESS UP HER LIFE. I SEEM TO DO THAT A LOT.
I HAVE A THEORY ABOUT THAT.
I JUST BROKE UP WITH A DEMON SORCERESS. ALUWYN. I'D CHANGED. SHE HADN'T.
I THINK THAT MIGHT BE A COMMON THING WITH IMMORTAL/HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.
WE'RE ALWAYS CHANGING. AGING. ADAPTING. AND YOU GUYS JUST...AREN'T.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN? THAT BUFFY'S BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME?
SPIKE'S IMMORTAL, TOO!
WELL, HE JUST GOT HIS SOUL BACK A FEW YEARS AGO. THAT'S A PRETTY BIG CHANGE.

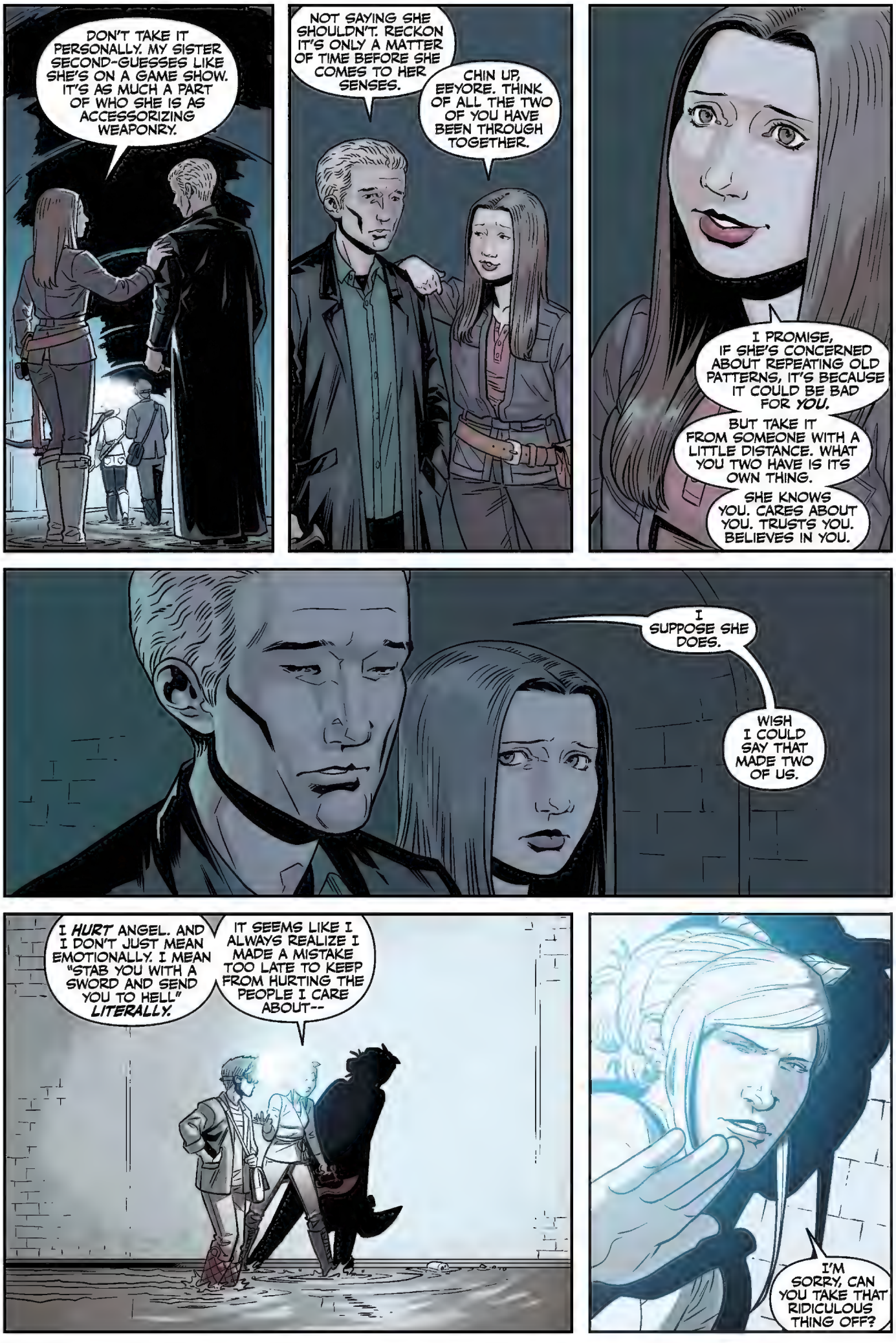
I KNOW. I'VE BEEN THERE, REMEMBER? OVER A CENTURY AGO!
A HELL OF A LOT!
AND, UM, HOW DIFFERENT ARE YOU NOW FROM, SAY, 1922?

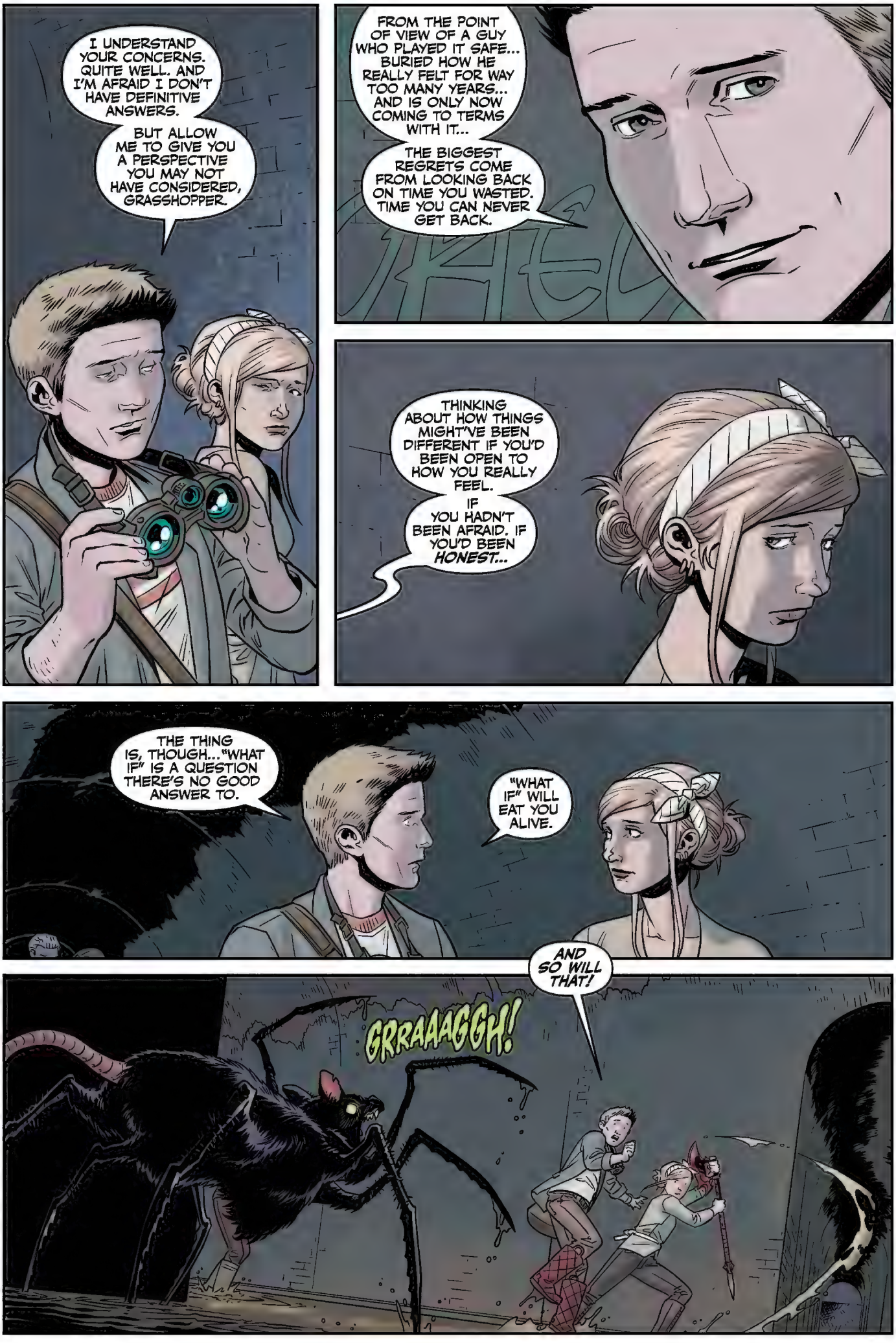
I USED TO BE THIS BROODING, TORTURED MESS, RACKED WITH GUILT.
HALF THE TIME WITH-DRAWN FROM THE WORLD, THE OTHER HALF JUMPING INTO THESE CRAZY, GRAND GESTURES--THAT WERE INEVITABLY GONNA BLOW UP IN MY FACE--TO TRY TO MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING I'D--



I'M GONNA GUARD THE REAR.

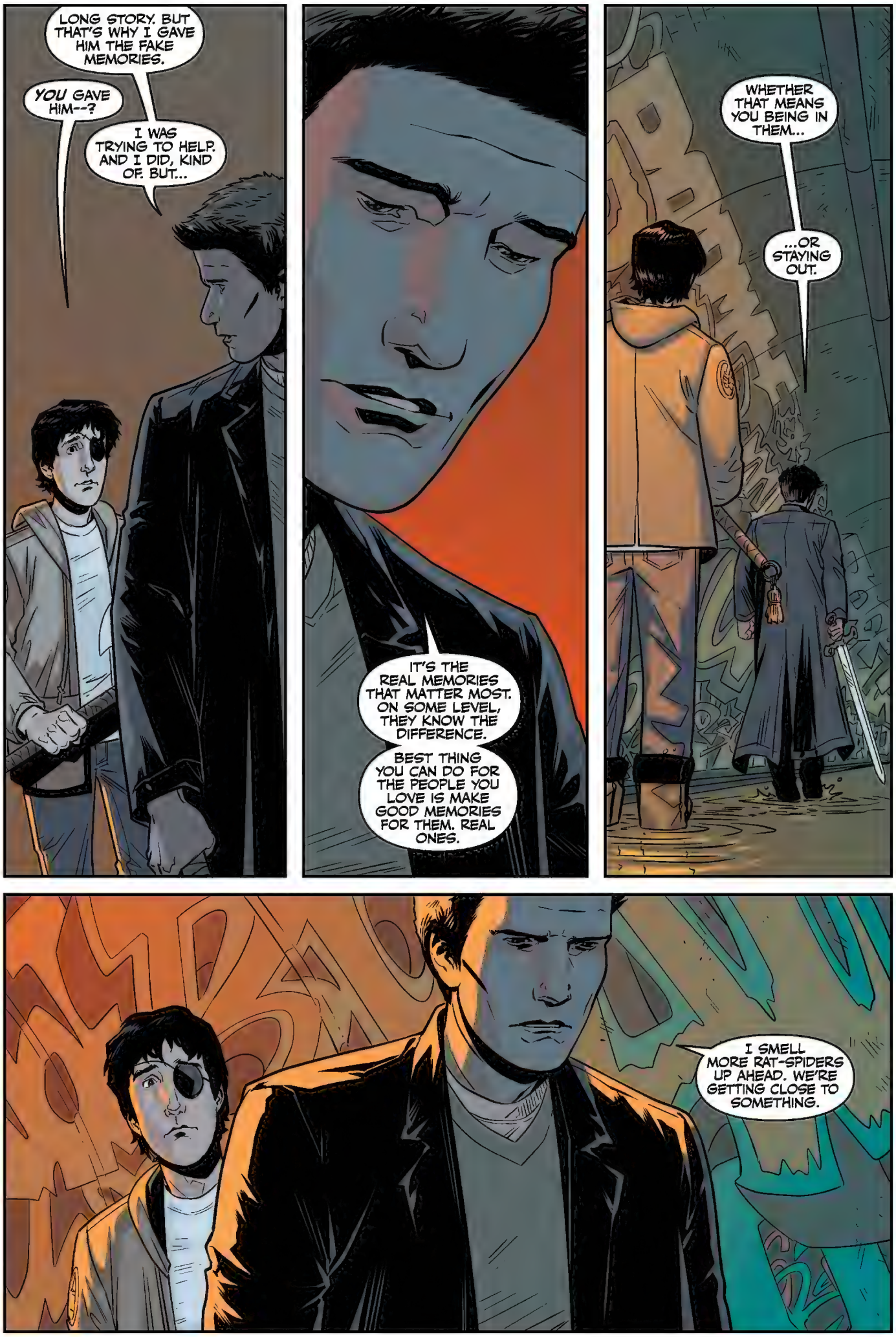
ELSEWHERE IN THE TUNNELS.
YOU WERE MORE'N FAIR. NOT THAT I DON'T SYMPATHIZE WITH THE POOR SOD. CAN'T BE EASY, SEEIN' SOMETHING YOU BOLLIXED UP WORKING OUT BEAUTIFULLY WITH ANOTHER BLOKE.
I MEAN, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOU AND ME, AND YOU AND HIM... ENDLESS!
OKAY, SURE, ON THE SURFACE, WE'RE BOTH VAMPIRES WITH SOULS...ESSENCE OF THE SAME DEMON IN US... FIGHTING THE FORCES OF DARKNESS. BUT LOOK DEEPER, AND...
WELL, FOR STARTERS, I'M BRITISH AND HE'S IRISH! NIGHT AND BLOODY DAY!
SPIKE!
GUARD THE REAR.


DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. MY SISTER SECOND-GUESSES LIKE SHE'S ON A GAME SHOW. IT'S AS MUCH A PART OF WHO SHE IS AS ACCESSORIZING WEAPONRY.
NOT SAYING SHE SHOULDN'T. RECKON IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE COMES TO HER SENSES.
CHIN UP, EEYORE. THINK OF ALL THE TWO OF YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH TOGETHER.
I PROMISE, IF SHE'S CONCERNED ABOUT REPEATING OLD PATTERNS, IT'S BECAUSE IT COULD BE BAD FOR *YOU.*
BUT TAKE IT FROM SOMEONE WITH A LITTLE DISTANCE. WHAT YOU TWO HAVE IS ITS OWN THING.
SHE KNOWS YOU. CARES ABOUT YOU. TRUSTS YOU. BELIEVES IN YOU.
I SUPPOSE SHE DOES.
WISH I COULD SAY THAT MADE TWO OF US.
I *HURT* ANGEL. AND I DON'T JUST MEAN EMOTIONALLY. I MEAN "STAB YOU WITH A SWORD AND SEND YOU TO HELL" *LITERALLY.*
IT SEEMS LIKE I ALWAYS REALIZE I MADE A MISTAKE TOO LATE TO KEEP FROM HURTING THE PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT--
I'M SORRY, CAN YOU TAKE THAT RIDICULOUS THING OFF?


I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERNS. QUITE WELL. AND I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE DEFINITIVE ANSWERS.
BUT ALLOW ME TO GIVE YOU A PERSPECTIVE YOU MAY NOT HAVE CONSIDERED, GRASSHOPPER.
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A GUY WHO PLAYED IT SAFE... BURIED HOW HE REALLY FELT FOR WAY TOO MANY YEARS... AND IS ONLY NOW COMING TO TERMS WITH IT...
THE BIGGEST REGRETS COME FROM LOOKING BACK ON TIME YOU WASTED. TIME YOU CAN NEVER GET BACK.
THINKING ABOUT HOW THINGS MIGHT'VE BEEN DIFFERENT IF YOU'D BEEN OPEN TO HOW YOU REALLY FEEL.
IF YOU HADN'T BEEN AFRAID. IF YOU'D BEEN HONEST...
THE THING IS, THOUGH..."WHAT IF" IS A QUESTION THERE'S NO GOOD ANSWER TO.
"WHAT IF" WILL EAT YOU ALIVE.
GRRAAAGGH!
AND SO WILL THAT!

DIFFERENT TUNNELS, DIFFERENT RAT-SPIDERS.
GILES, WHEN YOU SAID RAT-SPIDERS, I FIGURED THEY WERE THE SIZE OF RATS! OR SPIDERS! THIS IS FALSE ADVERTISING!
I SHALL LODGE A COMPLAINT WITH MANAGEMENT IF I'M NOT EATEN!
SHREEE!
FORGOT HOW MUCH THESE THINGS STINK.
YOU NEVER LIKED ME BEING WITH BUFFY.
W-WELL...IN MY DEFENSE, YOU DID KINDA TURN EVIL...
BUT HEY! I'VE GONE DOWN THE BETRAYAL ROAD MYSELF SINCE THEN. I HAVE A MUCH MORE NUANCED PERSPECTIVE.
I'M JUST LOOKING FOR HONESTY. FROM SOMEONE WITH TOUGH STANDARDS.
IS HE... GOOD TO HER?
IS SHE HAPPY?

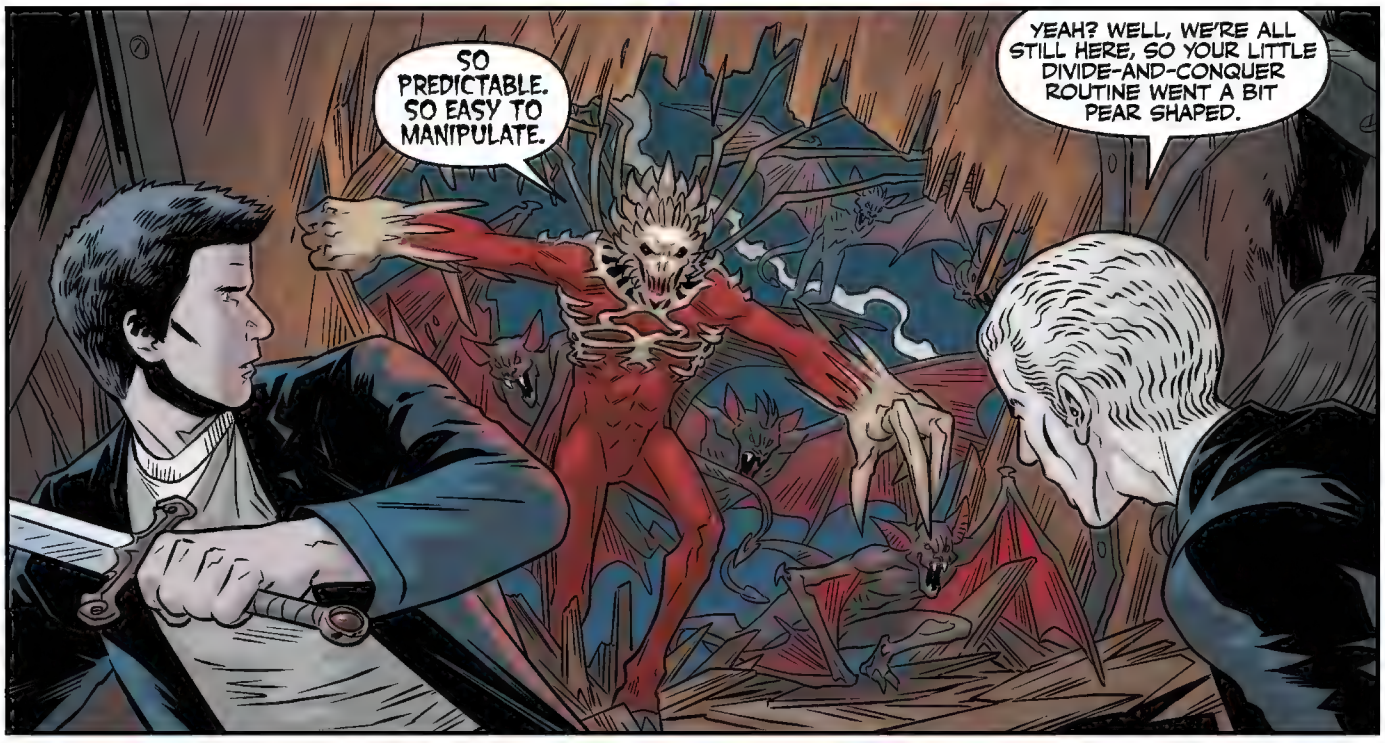
WELL, I MEAN...YEAH, OF COURSE HE'S GOOD TO HER. HE L--
UH, AND SHE SEEMS HAPPY. BUT ALSO NEUROTIC. BECAUSE, Y'KNOW, IT'S BUFFY.
BUT HAPPIER THAN SHE'S BEEN IN A WHILE, FROM WHAT I CAN SEE.
OKAY. WELL, THAT'S...THAT'S GOOD.
HOW ARE *YOU* DOING? WITH ALL THIS?
IT'S GOTTA BE--
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH DAWN--THE ARTIFICIAL MEMORIES--I HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE WITH THAT KIND OF THING.
MY SON, CONNOR.
CONNOR. RIGHT.
UH, HE DIDN'T *REALLY* TAKE A BUNCH OF PEOPLE HOSTAGE AND STRAP BOMBS TO THEM, DID HE?

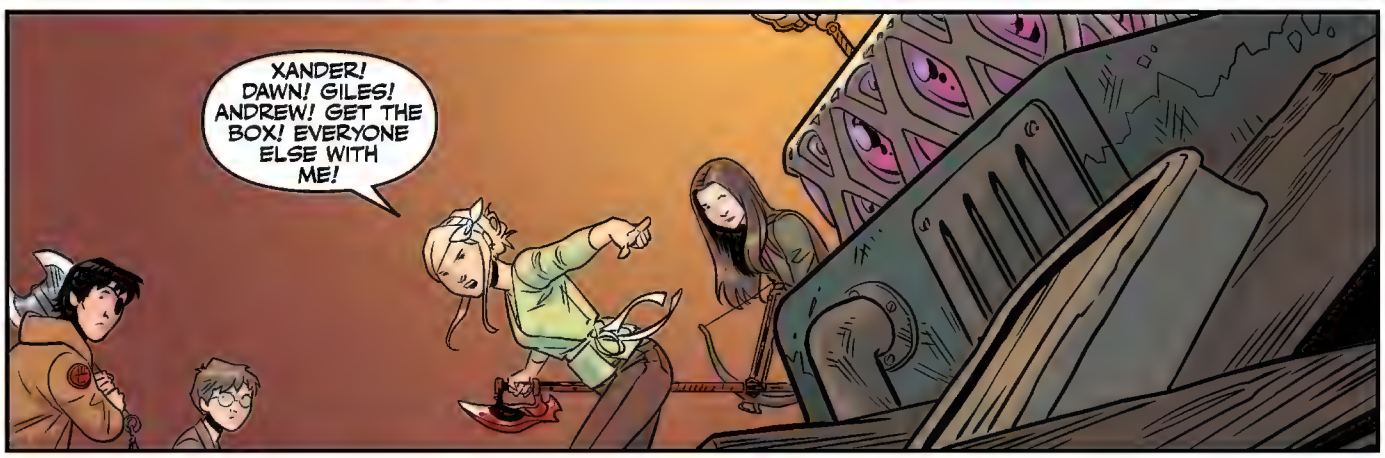

LONG STORY. BUT THAT'S WHY I GAVE HIM THE FAKE MEMORIES.
YOU GAVE HIM--?
I WAS TRYING TO HELP. AND I DID, KIND OF. BUT...
IT'S THE REAL MEMORIES THAT MATTER MOST. ON SOME LEVEL, THEY KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.
BEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE IS MAKE GOOD MEMORIES FOR THEM. REAL ONES.
WHETHER THAT MEANS YOU BEING IN THEM...
...OR STAYING OUT.
I SMELL MORE RAT-SPIDERS UP AHEAD. WE'RE GETTING CLOSE TO SOMETHING.

SOMEWHERE EQUALLY FOREBODING...
BKRASSH
OUT OF MY BLOODY WAY!
FINALLY! I HATE HOW HARD THESE NEW VAMPIRES ARE TO STAKE.
SLAYER, WATCH OUT! MINE'S TAKIN' TO THE AIR--
NOT FOR LONG.
SHHTHK
PAFT
CONCENTRATED ULTRAVIOLET WAVES FOR THE WIN!

AN OLD SHIPYARD? TRÈS MOODY.
GIVEN THE STATE OF THE SHIPS...
...I'D CALL IT MORE OF A *SCRAPYARD.*
I'D CALL IT ONE HELL OF A PLACE FOR A TRAP. EYES OPEN, EVERYONE.
MYSTIC EMANATIONS ARE STRONG UP AHEAD...

THERE. I DON'T EVEN NEED ANDREW'S MINER HELMET TO KNOW THAT'S IT.
"MINER HELMET"? I BEG YOUR--
WE SHOULD CALL THE OTHERS. WELLS, GET ON YOUR BANANA. AND I DESPISE YOU FOR MAKING ME SAY THAT.
NO NEED FOR BANANAS. LOOKS LIKE OUR PATHS LED TO THE SAME PLACE.
I DON'T GET IT. WHY? IT'S GOTTA BE ON PURPOSE.
SPLIT OUR FORCES? TRY TO THIN THE HERD, PICK OFF AS MANY OF US AS POSSIBLE BEFORE THE BIG CONFRONTATION?
THAT WOULD REQUIRE RATHER MORE THAN THE LEVEL OF OPPOSITION WE ENCOUNTERED.
UM, POINT OF ORDER. IF THE ONE TRAIL LED TO THE ARTIFACT, DOESN'T THAT MEAN THE OTHER TRAIL LED TO--
RRNNCHH


SO PREDICTABLE. SO EASY TO MANIPULATE.
YEAH? WELL, WE'RE ALL STILL HERE, SO YOUR LITTLE DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER ROUTINE WENT A BIT PEAR SHAPED.

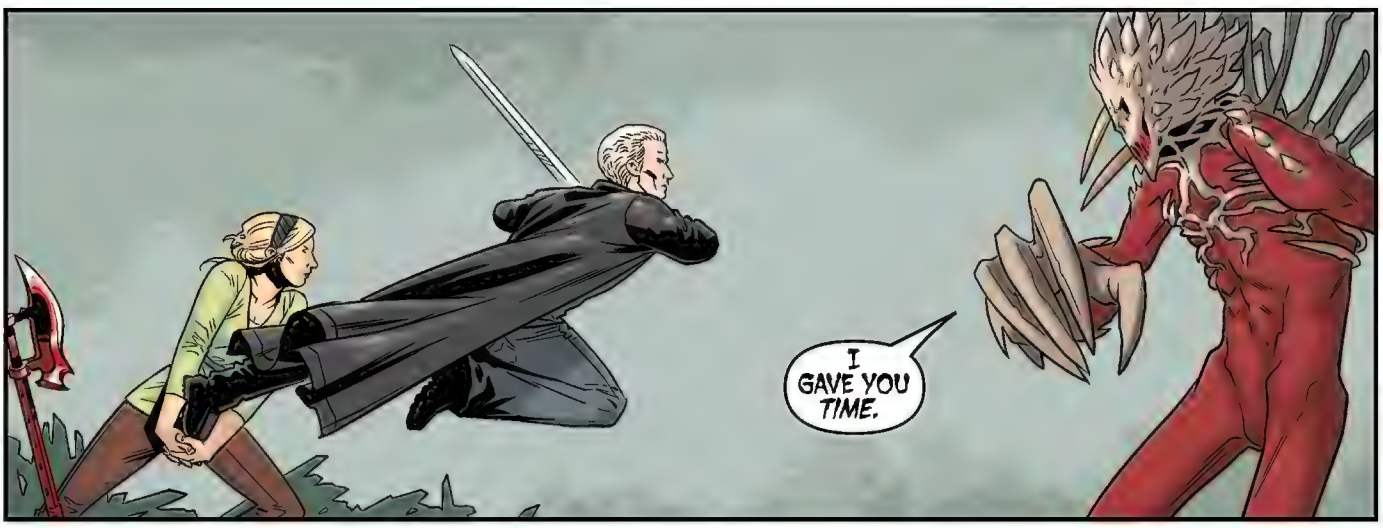

XANDER! DAWN! GILES! ANDREW! GET THE BOX! EVERYONE ELSE WITH ME!

SO YOU WANNA BE THE DEMON GODFATHER, HUH? GOOD IDEA. YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST TO HAVE IT.
LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS.

THIS IS THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER, RIGHT? WE SMASH IT--HE LOSES ALL HIS FRIENDS.
WAIT!
SPLAMM
I WAS GOING TO SAY IT WON'T BE QUITE SO EASY.
FASCINATING. THIS ARTIFACT DID NOT ORIGINATE ON OUR WORLD. IT CAME FROM A HELL DIMENSION.
AND IF WE TOUCH IT, I BET WE END UP LIKE XANDER'S AXE.
WONDER AXE! YOU WERE MY FAVORITE...
I'M READING MULTIPLE LAYERS OF DIFFERENT MAGICAL FREQUENCIES.
I'LL NEED TO REMOVE THEM ONE AT A TIME. LIKE PEELING AN ONION.
GREAT IDEA.
ONE SMALL HITCH.

WIL, DON'T LET 'EM GET PAST YOU!
TRYING... THERE'S A LOT OF 'EM--
GET HER ARMS! WRAP 'EM UP!
DON'T NEED MY ARMS TO MAKE YOU...
...BURN.
FWOOMF
BUT IT DOES MAKE DEFENDING YOURSELF DIFFICULT.
VZZASSHH
GUHH!
WILLOW!

YOU'RE DONE, PAL. I WAS KILLING DEMON LORDS BEFORE I COULD VOTE.
YOU KNOW IT, TOO, OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TRIED TO SPLIT US UP AND PICK US OFF.
TOO RIGHT. SOUND REASONING, MIND...YOU CAN'T STAND UP TO ALL OF US TOGETHER. CAN'T USE YOUR MIND MOJO ON ME OR ANGEL IF WE'RE BOTH FIGHTIN' YOU.
SO IT AIN'T A BAD IDEA, ALL SAID.
PITY IT DIDN'T WORK.
TA, LOVE.
DIDN'T IT?

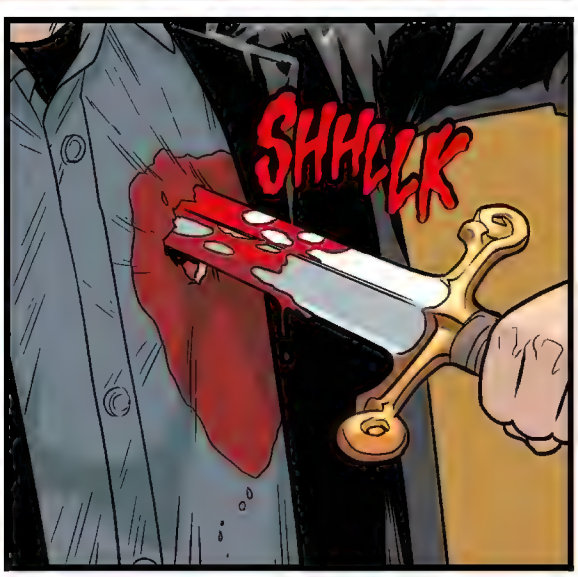

I GAVE YOU TIME.

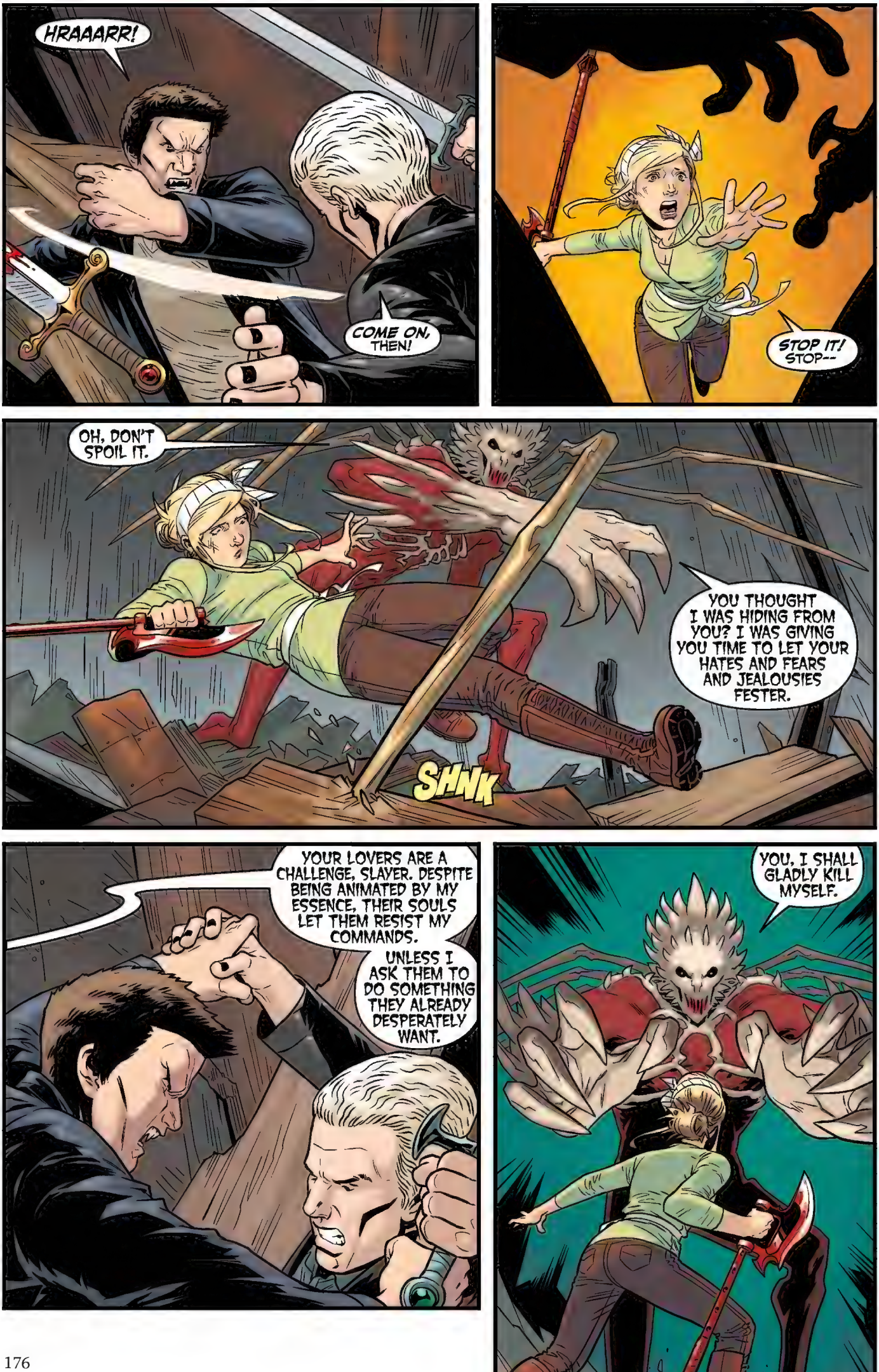
ANGEL, COVER HIM!
TIME FOR YOUR FEARS, HATES, AND DOUBTS TO RISE TO THE FOREFRONT OF YOUR MINDS. MAKING YOU SUSCEPTIBLE TO MY INFLUENCE.
TIME TO BE WEAKENED BY YOUR GREATEST ENEMY.

YOURSELVES.

HAHA HAHA!
ANGEL!

OLD DEMONS, CONCLUSION

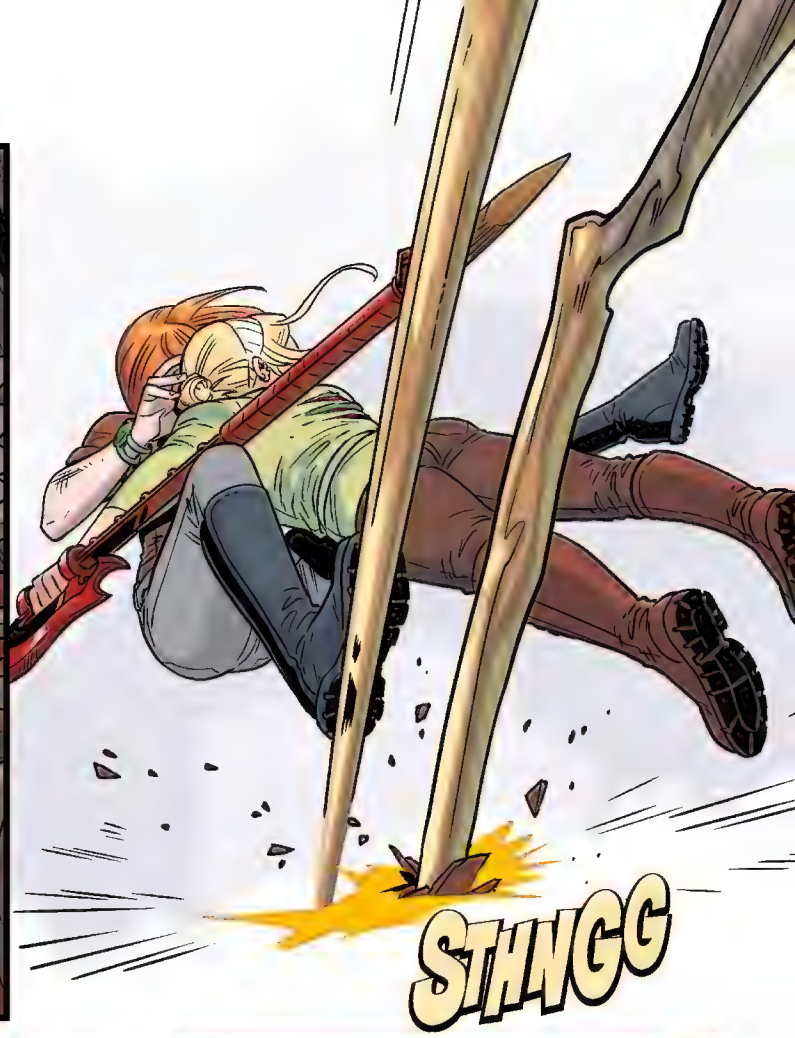



HRAAARR!
COME ON, THEN!
STOP IT! STOP--
OH, DON'T SPOIL IT.
YOU THOUGHT I WAS HIDING FROM YOU? I WAS GIVING YOU TIME TO LET YOUR HATES AND FEARS AND JEALOUSIES FESTER.
SHNK
YOUR LOVERS ARE A CHALLENGE, SLAYER. DESPITE BEING ANIMATED BY MY ESSENCE, THEIR SOULS LET THEM RESIST MY COMMANDS.
UNLESS I ASK THEM TO DO SOMETHING THEY ALREADY DESPERATELY WANT.
YOU. I SHALL GLADLY KILL MYSELF.

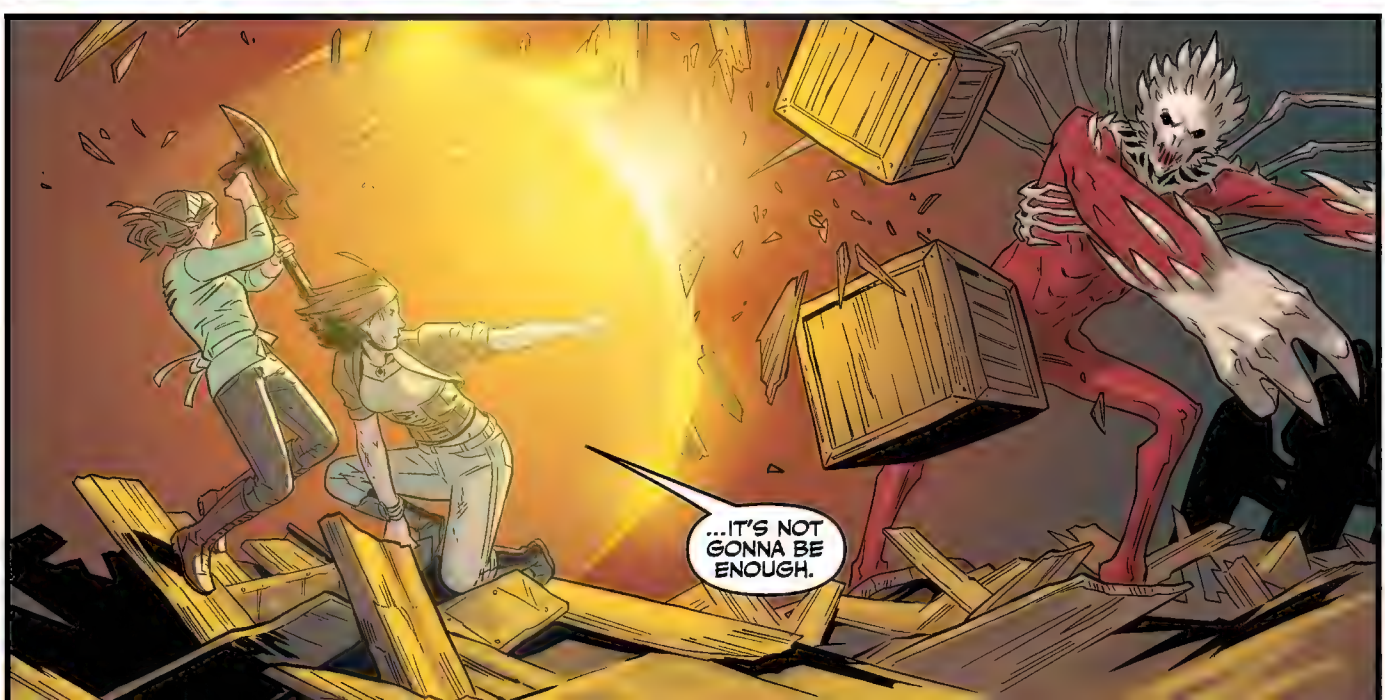
SPECTRAL ANALYSIS CONFIRMS LAYERS OF MAGICAL PROTECTION. GILES, WE'LL NEED YOU TO UNRAVEL THEM BEFORE WE CAN SO MUCH AS TOUCH THIS THING!
I'M A BIT OCCUPIED AT THE MOMENT!
HATE TO SAY IT, BUT I DON'T THINK WE CAN HOLD OFF ALL THESE NEW-BREED VAMPS WITHOUT YOU. THEY'RE TOO HARD TO KILL!
WE'RE FALLING APART HERE...

IF YOU TWO REALLY WANNA KILL SOMEONE, I HAVE A WAY BETTER SUGGESTION!
TALK TO THE FOREHEAD! HE'S THE ONE BOLLIXING IT UP!
THE SLAYERS OF THE PAST KNEW EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS MADE THEM WEAK.
GHAHH!
A LESSON YOU'LL LEARN FAR TOO LATE.
HRRAAA!
VRRAKT
DEPENDS WHO YOU'RE ATTACHED TO, DOESN'T IT?

UNNH...
DIE, WITCH.
WIL!


STHNGG

YOU'RE HURT--
BEEN BETTER, YEAH. BUT I CAN FIGHT.
YOU AND ME, THEN.
NORMALLY, I'D TAKE THOSE ODDS ANY DAY. BUT THIS TIME...


...IT'S NOT GONNA BE ENOUGH.

SPIKE, STOP ENJOYING THE FACT THAT ANGEL'S GONE NUTS AND *HELP HIM!* THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING YOU CAN DO. YOU'VE KNOWN HIM A HUNDRED YEARS!
MORE. AIN'T LIKE THERE'S EVER BEEN MUCH TO THE TOSSER. CATHOLIC GUILT AND DADDY ISSUES, YAWN...
HANG ON.
SMACK
LOOK AT YOU, BOYO. YOU'RE *PATHETIC.*
AFTER ALL THIS TIME, ALL YOUR TALK OF POWER AND INDEPENDENCE...
...YOU'RE STILL DOING WHAT YOUR FATHER TELLS YOU.
DANCING LIKE A PUPPET ON A STRING TO WIN HIS APPROVAL.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, *LIAM?*

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, FOOL? I GAVE YOU A COMMAND!
ARE YOU STUPID, OR JUST USELESS? DO AS I SAY!
N...NO.
NEVER AGAIN!

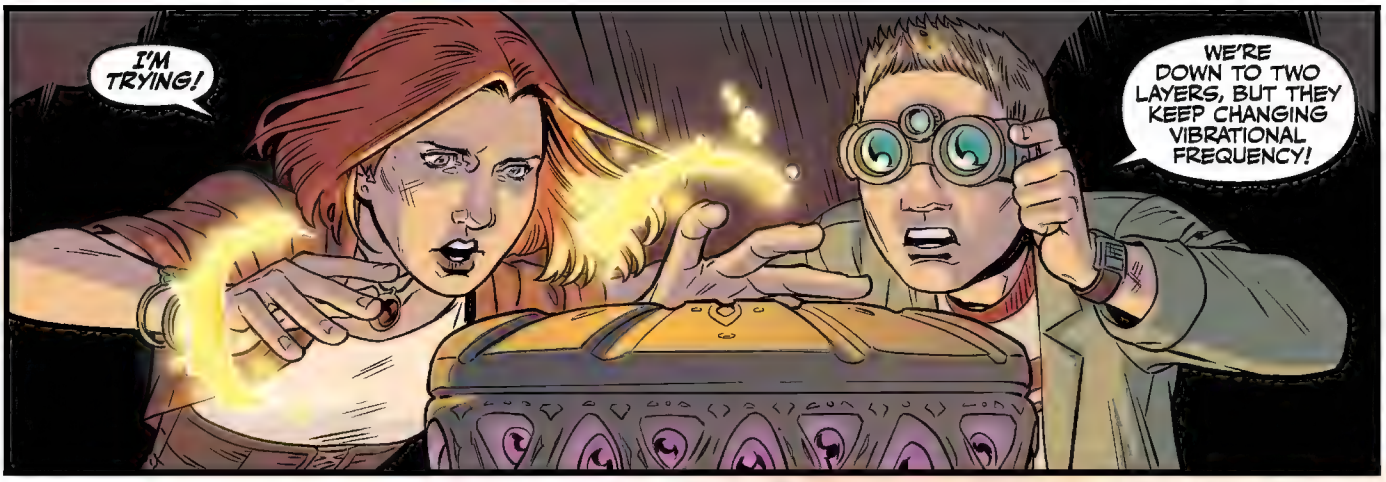
S-SORRY. I'M GOOD NOW.
LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY.
WIL, GO HELP THE OTHERS WITH THE ARTIFACT. WE GOT THIS.
YOU SURE?
WE'RE SURE.

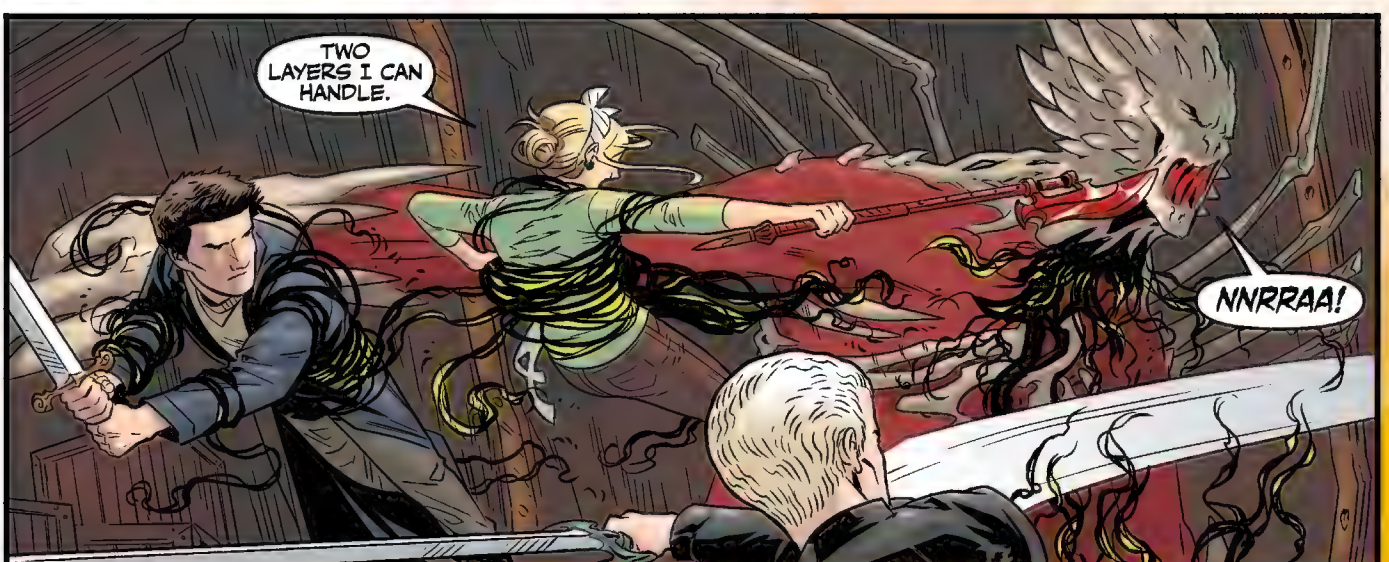
THE *ARROGANCE!* TO THINK YOU CAN STAND AGAINST ME, LET ALONE DEFEAT ME, WHEN YOU CAN BARELY KEEP FROM MURDERING EACH OTHER?
GOOD POINT. BUT Y'KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FIGHT ALL THE TIME?

YOU GET REALLY GOOD AT IT.
HHRRAAA!

YAY!
I REALLY MUST WORK ON MY FIREBALLS.
DON'T GO THERE. COMPARING BALLS LEADS NOWHERE GOOD.
YOU GUYS OKAY FROM HERE? CRACKING THIS IS GONNA TAKE SOME METAPHYSICAL ELBOW GREASE.
WHY AREN'T *YOUR* PROTECTION SPELLS THAT GOOD?
BECAUSE *I* DON'T WANT TO KILL IDIOTS LIKE *YOU.*
WE CAN MANAGE, WILLOW...FOR THE MOMENT.
DO HURRY, THOUGH.

OWW!
BRANG
GOTCHA.
WHITHTCH
SHLKK
OKAY, GROSS.
WILLOW, ANYTIME NOW!


I'M TRYING!
WE'RE DOWN TO TWO LAYERS, BUT THEY KEEP CHANGING VIBRATIONAL FREQUENCY!


TWO LAYERS I CAN HANDLE.
NNRRAA!

QUICK, BEFORE HE HEALS.
ON THREE. ONE... TWO...

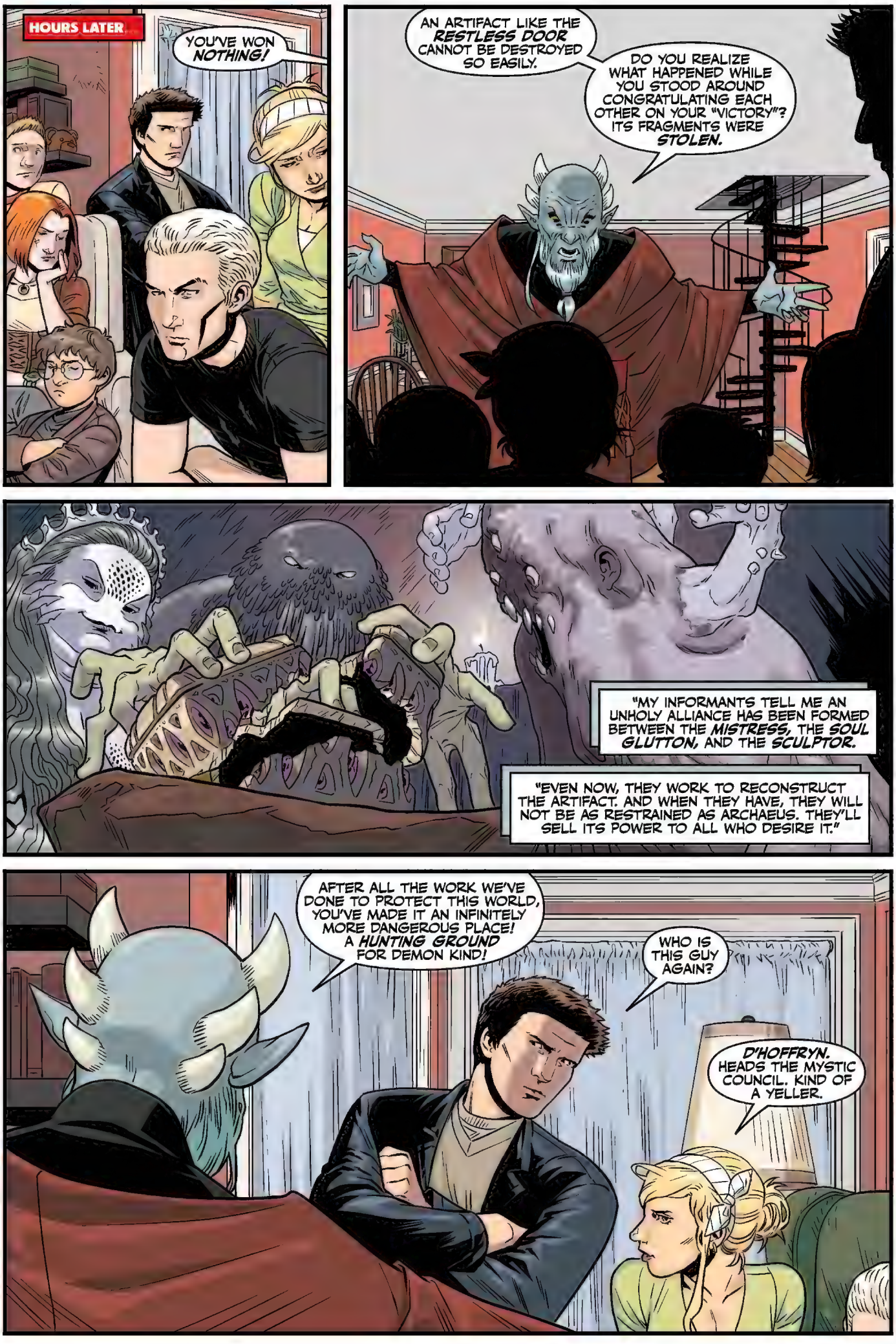
THREE!

NOOO!

KRNCH

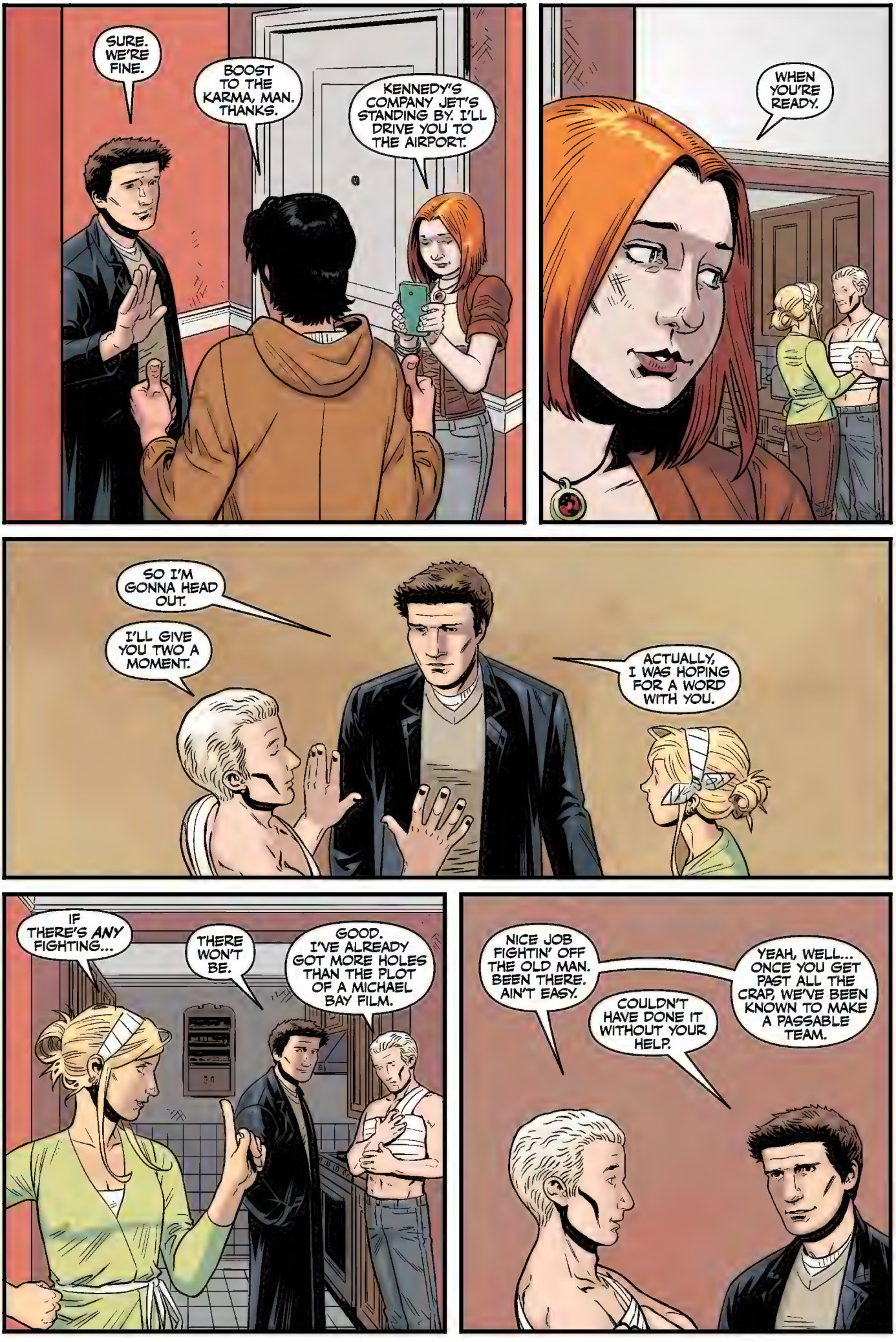
FWAASSHH

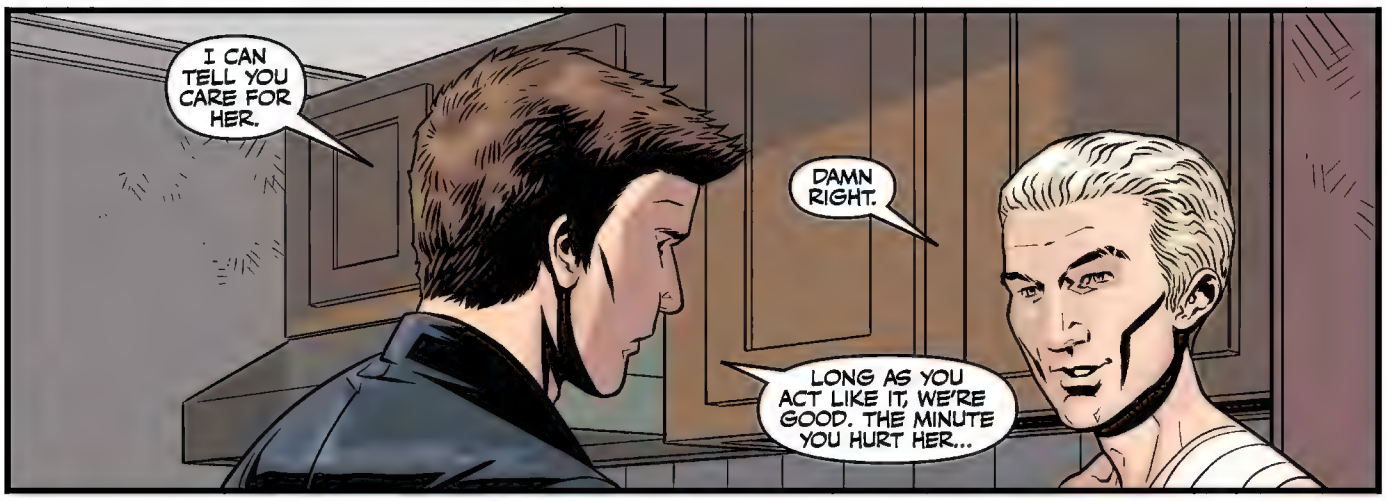
GAH! I'M BLIND! THIS SUCKS! I SHOULD AT LEAST GET RADAR SENSE TO COMPENSATE!
IS...IS SOMEONE THERE?
YOUR VISION'LL COME BACK IN A FEW SECONDS. YOU PROBABLY GOT IT WORSE BECAUSE OF YOUR X-RAY SPECS.
IT NEVER GOES WELL WHEN I ASK THIS, BUT...DID WE WIN?
PAFT
I...THINK SO? IT LOOKS LIKE ARCHAEUS TOOK IT ON THE LAM. HIS MINIONS ARE DEFINITELY DUST. GUESS HE DIDN'T SEE A PERCENTAGE IN STICKING AROUND.
THE ARTIFACT...IS IT--?
I'M TRYING TO PINPOINT ITS ENERGY, BUT IT'S KIND OF EVERYWHERE RIGHT NOW. I WOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH, THOUGH. IT PROBABLY VAPORIZED...
"...AND IF IT DIDN'T, IT'S IN NO SHAPE TO HURT ANYONE."

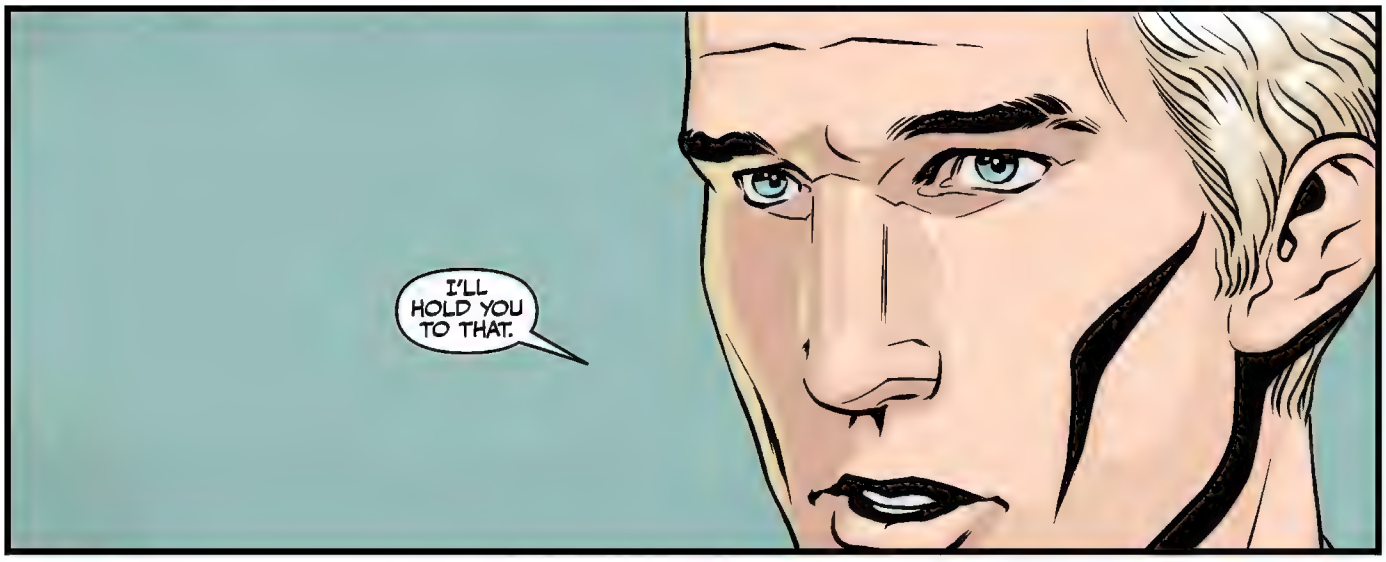

HOURS LATER
YOU'VE WON NOTHING!
AN ARTIFACT LIKE THE RESTLESS DOOR CANNOT BE DESTROYED SO EASILY.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT HAPPENED WHILE YOU STOOD AROUND CONGRATULATING EACH OTHER ON YOUR "VICTORY"? ITS FRAGMENTS WERE STOLEN.
"MY INFORMANTS TELL ME AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE HAS BEEN FORMED BETWEEN THE MISTRESS, THE SOUL GLUTTON, AND THE SCULPTOR.
"EVEN NOW, THEY WORK TO RECONSTRUCT THE ARTIFACT. AND WHEN THEY HAVE, THEY WILL NOT BE AS RESTRAINED AS ARCHAEUS. THEY'LL SELL ITS POWER TO ALL WHO DESIRE IT."
AFTER ALL THE WORK WE'VE DONE TO PROTECT THIS WORLD, YOU'VE MADE IT AN INFINITELY MORE DANGEROUS PLACE! A HUNTING GROUND FOR DEMON KIND!
WHO IS THIS GUY AGAIN?
D'HOFFRYN. HEADS THE MYSTIC COUNCIL. KIND OF A YELLER.

LOOK, WE HAVE THE MAGIC RULE BOOK. CAN'T WE JUST WRITE IN IT THAT THE RESTLESS DOOR DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE?
SADLY, NO. THE BOOK SHAPES THE LAWS OF MAGIC ON *THIS* WORLD. THE RESTLESS DOOR ORIGINATED IN A HELL DIMENSION. WE HAVE NO CLAIM OVER IT.
TRUE, BUT THE BOY HAS IDENTIFIED OUR BEST OPTION. THERE ARE MEASURES WE CAN TAKE, LAWS WE MAY ESTABLISH WITHIN THE BOOK TO MITIGATE THE DANGER.
BUT ULTIMATELY, WE MUST FIND THE DEMON LORDS AND CLOSE THE PORTAL--FOREVER. THEY KNOW THIS, AND WILL UNLEASH THE SPAWN OF ENDLESS HELLS INTO THE WORLD TO DISTRACT US.
THERE ARE FOLKS WE CAN CALL. PUT 'EM ON HIGH ALERT. RILEY, BILLY, KENNEDY...THERE'S NOT MUCH THEY CAN'T HANDLE WHILE WE GO AFTER THE BOSSES.
WE MUST ALSO BE VIGILANT FOR ARCHAEUS. LOSING HIS SOURCE OF POWER DIMINISHES HIS THREAT, BUT HARDLY ELIMINATES IT.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TRACK HIM EVER SINCE HE BAILED, BUT HE'S NOT AROUND HERE.
I'VE GOT SOME PRETTY GOOD CONTACTS BACK IN LONDON. I'LL PUT THE WORD OUT. SEE IF I CAN FIGURE OUT WHERE HE'S HIDING.
AND GIVE FAITH AND THE OTHERS THE HEADS-UP THAT THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET WORSE.

I'LL REACH OUT TO OUR OTHER FRIENDS. INFORM THEM OF THE THREAT.
WHILE I SHALL ALERT THE COUNCIL'S ALLIES. LET THOSE OF US REMAINING RECONVENE ON THE MORROW.
I'M OFF TO THE CRIB FOR A DISCO NAP. I HAVE A DATE TONIGHT...WITH A *FELLA*. AWESOME SEEING YOU, ANGEL.
YOU TOO. I'M GLAD YOU, Y'KNOW, FIGURED OUT...
YOU *REALLY* DIDN'T KNOW?
I SHOULD HIT THE HAY TOO. GOT CLASS LATER, THEN STUDY GROUP.
YEAH, AND I'VE GOT WORK.
AND, Y'KNOW... WORK.
SO, UH, WE'RE COOL?
WHAT DO YOU CARE? YOU NEVER LIKED ME.
WELL. THERAPY, RIGHT? BEEN TRYING TO HAVE AN OPEN MIND.
MAYBE WE HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN I REALIZED.

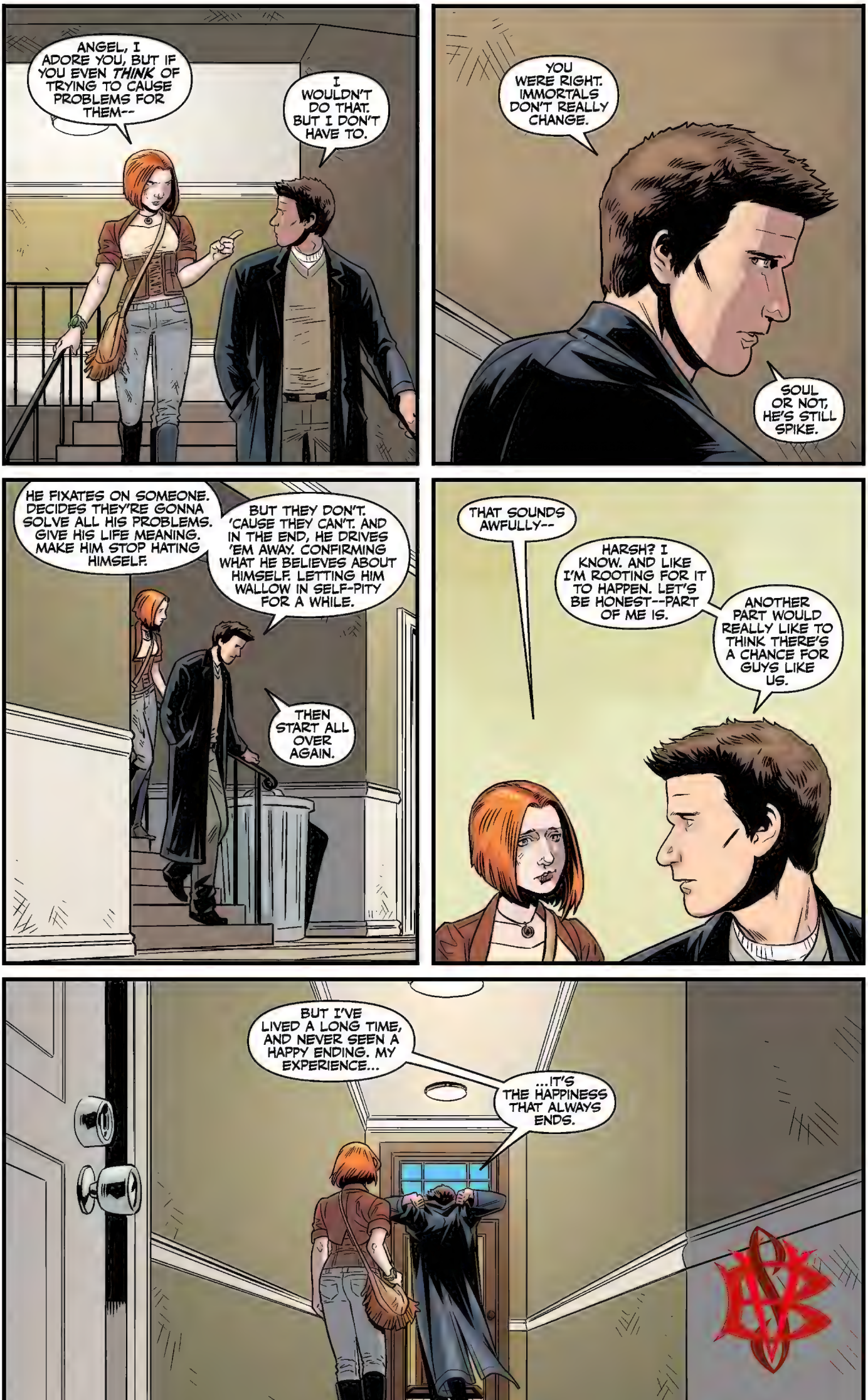

SURE. WE'RE FINE.
BOOST TO THE KARMA, MAN. THANKS.
KENNEDY'S COMPANY JET'S STANDING BY. I'LL DRIVE YOU TO THE AIRPORT.
WHEN YOU'RE READY.
SO I'M GONNA HEAD OUT.
I'LL GIVE YOU TWO A MOMENT.
ACTUALLY, I WAS HOPING FOR A WORD WITH YOU.
IF THERE'S ANY FIGHTING...
THERE WON'T BE.
GOOD. I'VE ALREADY GOT MORE HOLES THAN THE PLOT OF A MICHAEL BAY FILM.
NICE JOB FIGHTIN' OFF THE OLD MAN. BEEN THERE. AIN'T EASY.
COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOUR HELP.
YEAH, WELL... ONCE YOU GET PAST ALL THE CRAP, WE'VE BEEN KNOWN TO MAKE A PASSABLE TEAM.


I CAN TELL YOU CARE FOR HER.
DAMN RIGHT.
LONG AS YOU ACT LIKE IT, WE'RE GOOD. THE MINUTE YOU HURT HER...

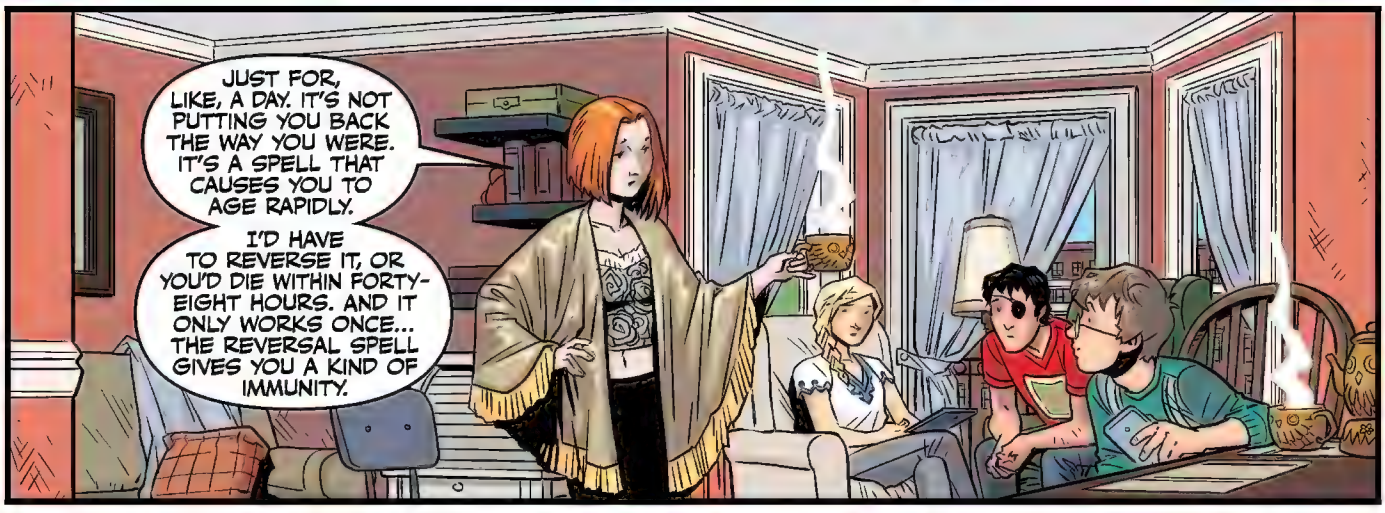

I'LL HOLD YOU TO THAT.

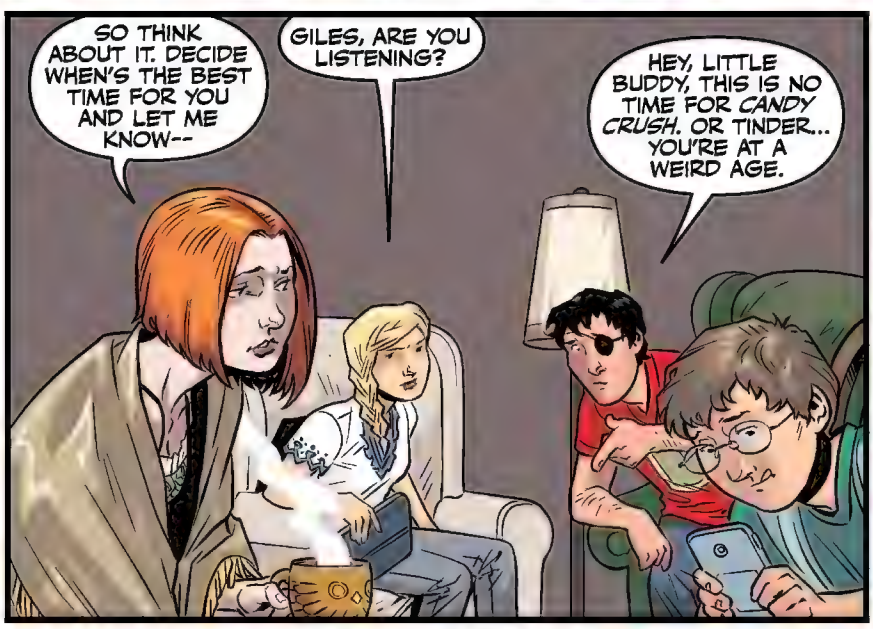
SO...
SO.
I KNOW THERE WERE SOME...BUMPS. BUT IT WAS REALLY GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
I FEEL BAD IT TOOK SO LONG. I...MISSED YOU.
I KNOW THINGS WITH US ARE NEVER GONNA BE SIMPLE.
BUT AM I OVERREACHING IF I THINK WE'RE BOTH STRONG ENOUGH NOW TO BE PART OF EACH OTHER'S LIVES AGAIN?
I'D HATE IT IF WE WEREN'T.
SO, ME AND SPIKE...?
ALL I EVER WANTED WAS FOR YOU TO BE HAPPY.
YOU SEEM LIKE YOU ARE.
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.

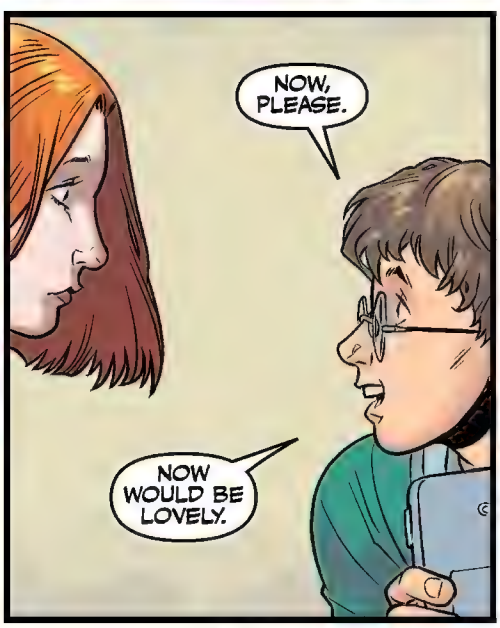
KEEP IN TOUCH. INVESTIGATE SOCIAL MEDIA.
I'M FINALLY GETTING USED TO CELL PHONES. THAT OKAY?
IT'S A START. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, ANGEL.
THAT WAS REALLY BIG OF YOU. COULDN'T HAVE BEEN EASY.
WASN'T ALL THAT HARD.
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL EVER LAST.


ANGEL, I ADORE YOU, BUT IF YOU EVEN *THINK* OF TRYING TO CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THEM--
I WOULDN'T DO THAT. BUT I DON'T HAVE TO.
YOU WERE RIGHT. IMMORTALS DON'T REALLY CHANGE.
SOUL OR NOT, HE'S STILL SPIKE.
HE FIXATES ON SOMEONE. DECIDES THEY'RE GONNA SOLVE ALL HIS PROBLEMS. GIVE HIS LIFE MEANING. MAKE HIM STOP HATING HIMSELF.
BUT THEY DON'T. 'CAUSE THEY CAN'T. AND IN THE END, HE DRIVES 'EM AWAY. CONFIRMING WHAT HE BELIEVES ABOUT HIMSELF. LETTING HIM WALLOW IN SELF-PITY FOR A WHILE.
THEN START ALL OVER AGAIN.
THAT SOUNDS AWFULLY--
HARSH? I KNOW. AND LIKE I'M ROOTING FOR IT TO HAPPEN. LET'S BE HONEST--PART OF ME IS.
ANOTHER PART WOULD REALLY LIKE TO THINK THERE'S A CHANCE FOR GUYS LIKE US.
BUT I'VE LIVED A LONG TIME, AND NEVER SEEN A HAPPY ENDING. MY EXPERIENCE...
...IT'S THE HAPPINESS THAT ALWAYS ENDS.

YOU CAN MAKE ME AN ADULT AGAIN?

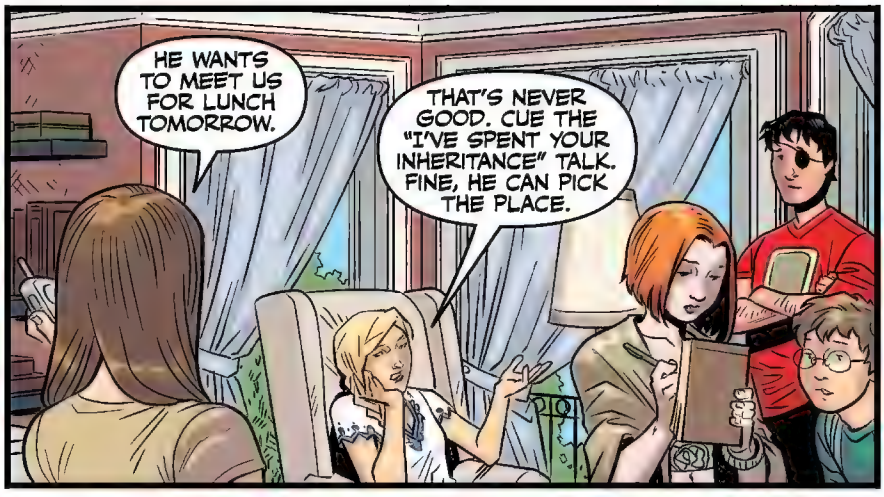

JUST FOR, LIKE, A DAY. IT'S NOT PUTTING YOU BACK THE WAY YOU WERE. IT'S A SPELL THAT CAUSES YOU TO AGE RAPIDLY.
I'D HAVE TO REVERSE IT, OR YOU'D DIE WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS. AND IT ONLY WORKS ONCE... THE REVERSAL SPELL GIVES YOU A KIND OF IMMUNITY.

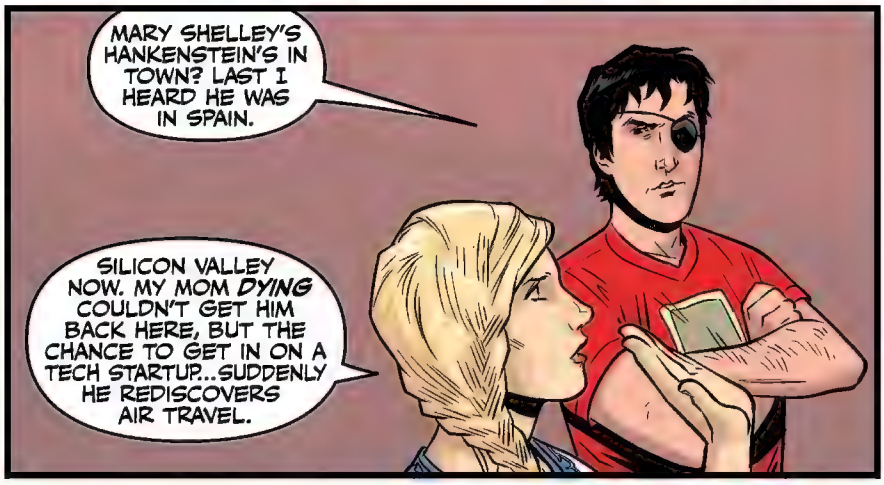

SO THINK ABOUT IT. DECIDE WHEN'S THE BEST TIME FOR YOU AND LET ME KNOW--
GILES, ARE YOU LISTENING?
HEY, LITTLE BUDDY, THIS IS NO TIME FOR *CANDY CRUSH*. OR TINDER... YOU'RE AT A WEIRD AGE.


NOW, PLEASE.
NOW WOULD BE LOVELY.

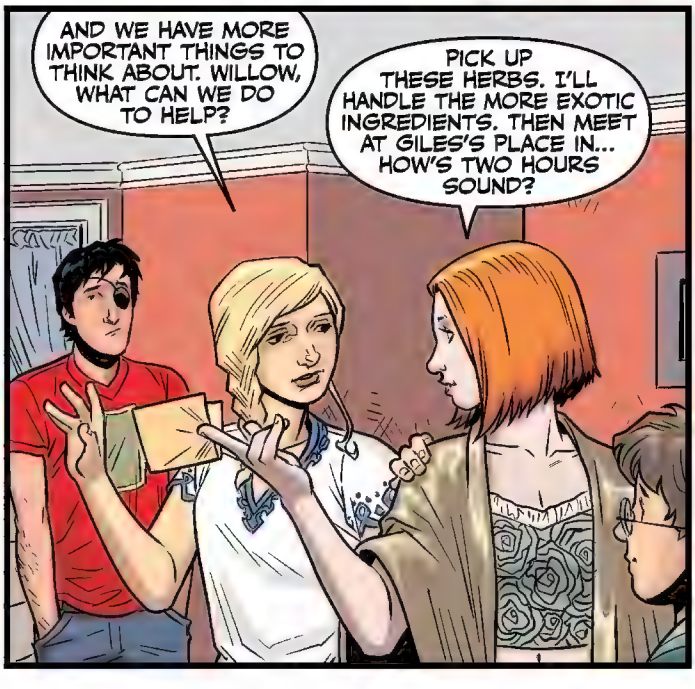
FREAKY GILES DAY
Olivia
Are you free?
11:43 AM
Yes
11:44 AM

BUFFY! DAD'S ON THE PHONE.
AND THE PERFUNCTORY HANK SUMMERS MONTHLY CHECK-IN COMES EARLY. TELL HIM I'LL CALL HIM BACK.

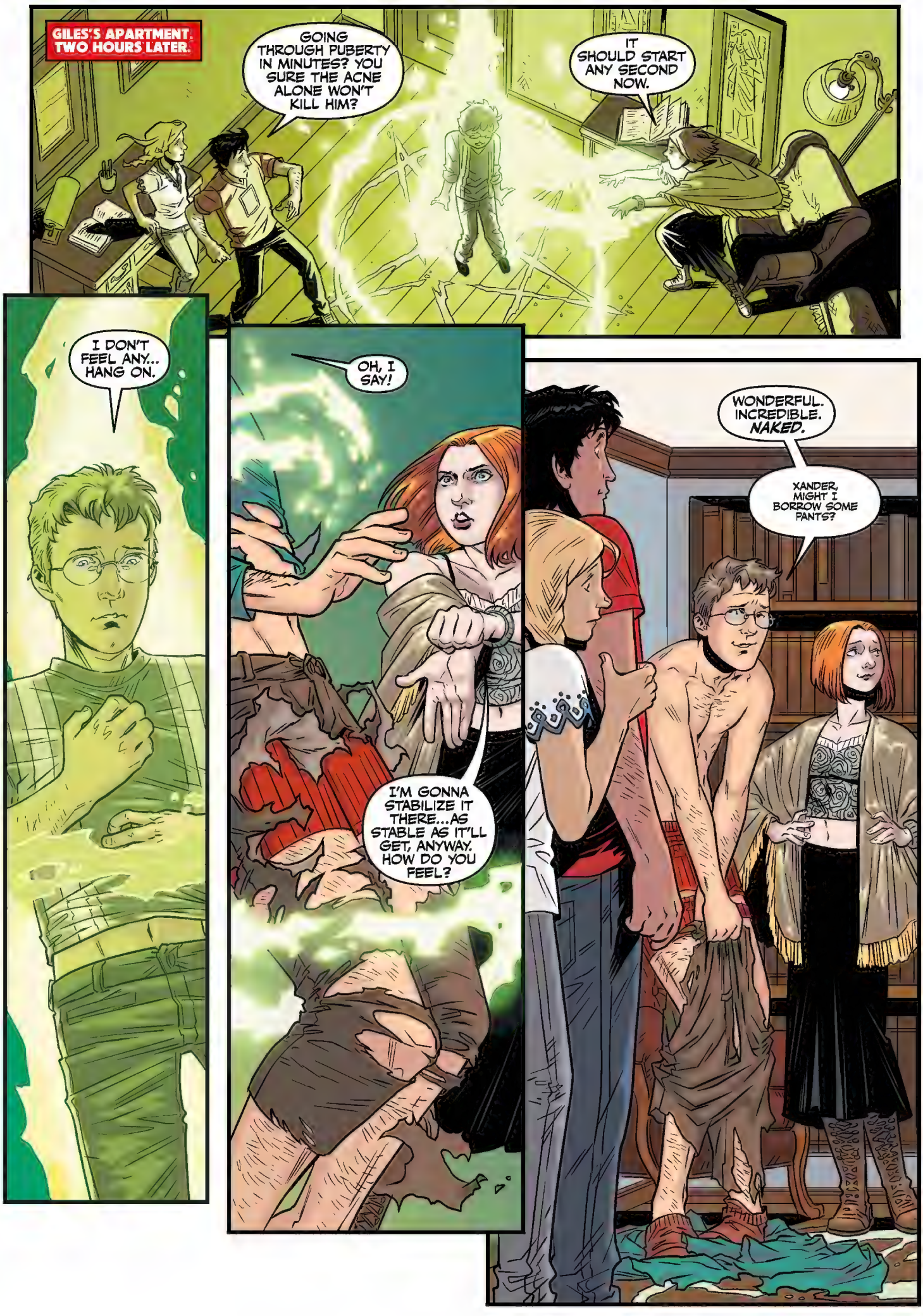

HE WANTS TO MEET US FOR LUNCH TOMORROW.
THAT'S NEVER GOOD. CUE THE "I'VE SPENT YOUR INHERITANCE" TALK. FINE, HE CAN PICK THE PLACE.


MARY SHELLEY'S HANKENSTEIN'S IN TOWN? LAST I HEARD HE WAS IN SPAIN.
SILICON VALLEY NOW. MY MOM *DYING* COULDN'T GET HIM BACK HERE, BUT THE CHANCE TO GET IN ON A TECH STARTUP...SUDDENLY HE REDISCOVERS AIR TRAVEL.

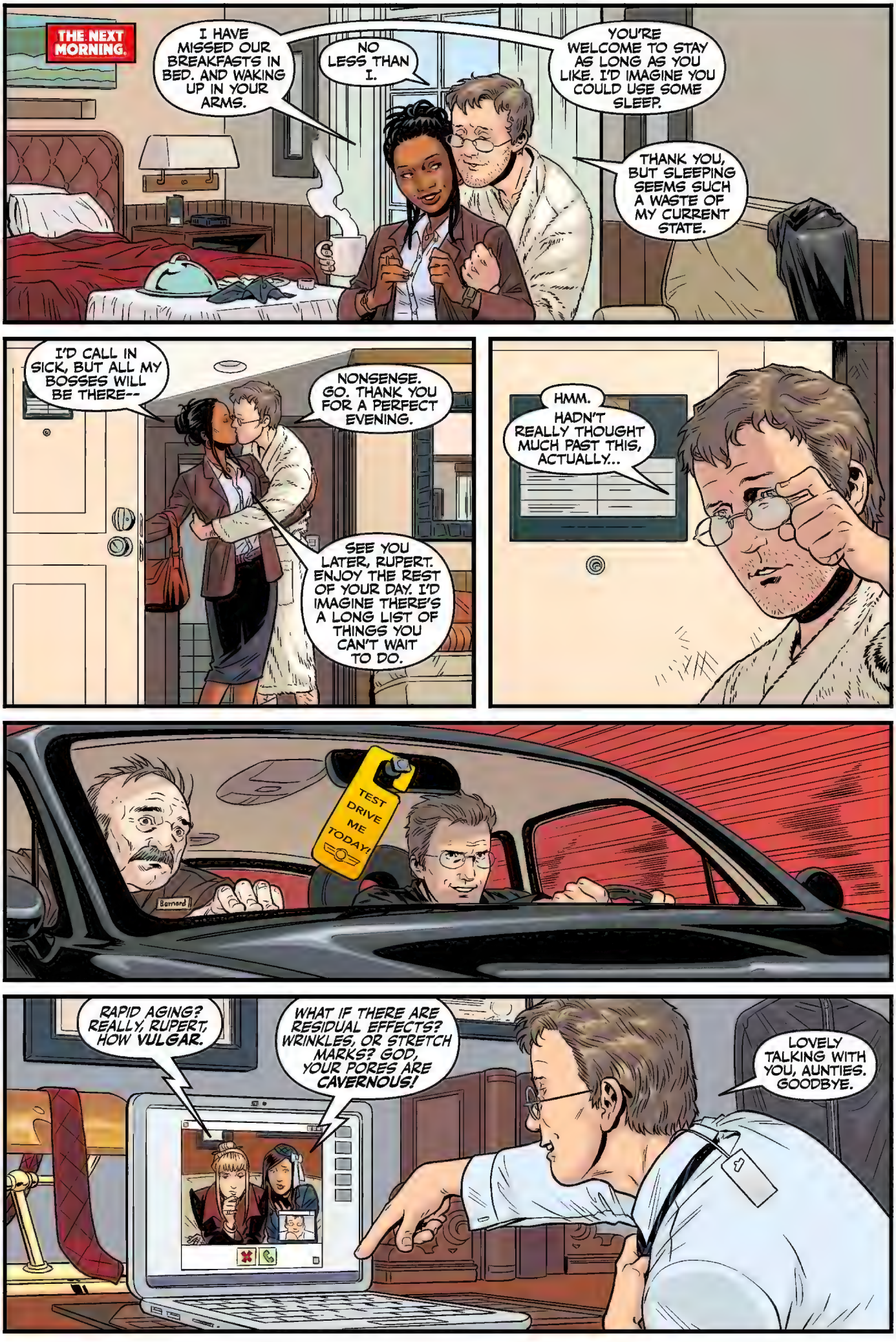
LISTEN...SPEAKING AS A CHILD OF, SHALL WE SAY, *SUBOPTIMAL* PARENTS MYSELF...BE CAREFUL, BUFFY. HE MIGHT SAY HE'S CHANGED, AND YOU MAY WANT TO BELIEVE HIM--
HA. RIGHT. XANDER, THAT MAN HAS EXHAUSTED EVERY POSSIBLE WAY TO FAIL AT FATHERHOOD. I'VE ALWAYS GOT MY GUARD UP. DON'T WORRY.

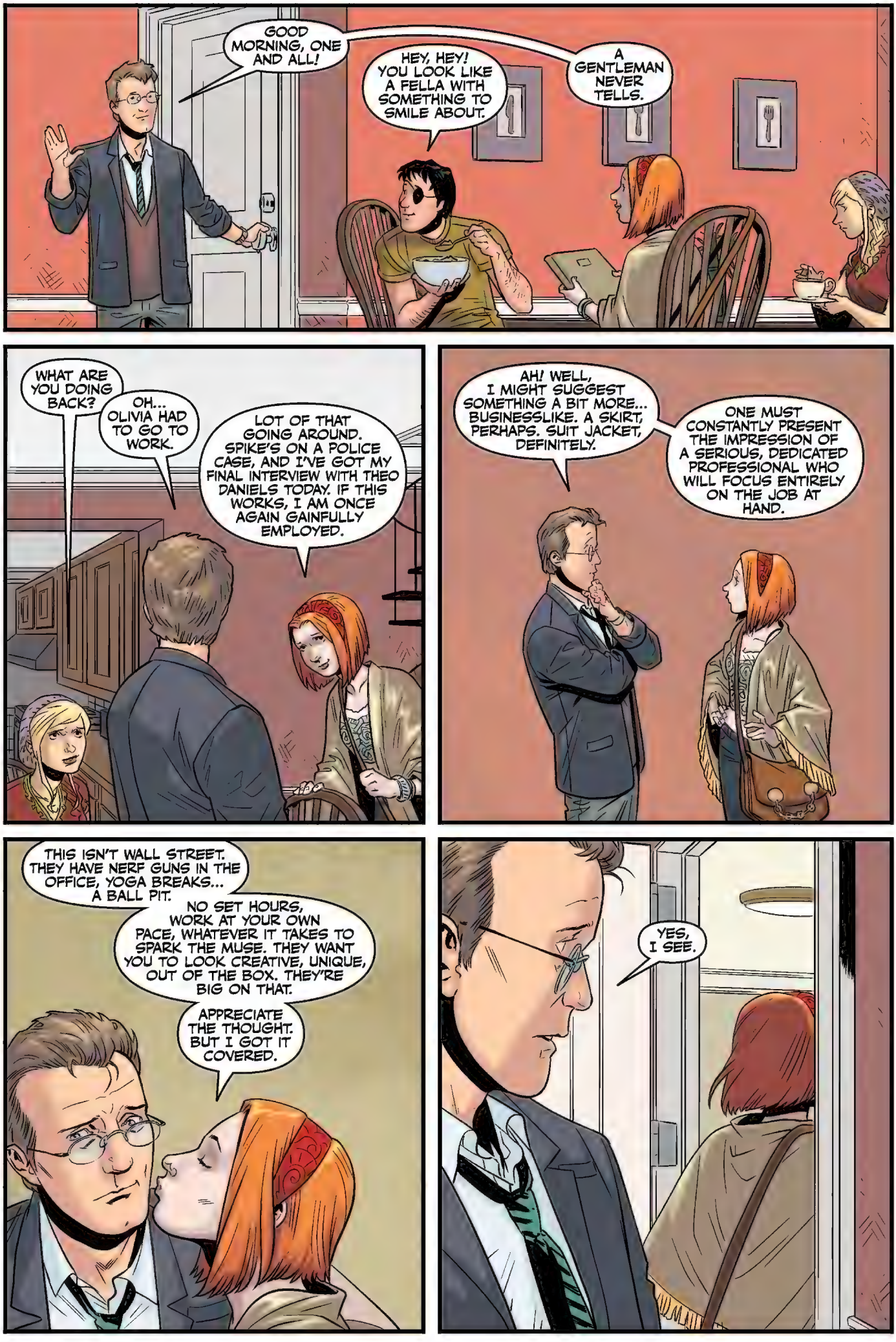

AND WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO THINK ABOUT. WILLOW, WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?
PICK UP THESE HERBS. I'LL HANDLE THE MORE EXOTIC INGREDIENTS. THEN MEET AT GILES'S PLACE IN... HOW'S TWO HOURS SOUND?

IT SOUNDS WONDERFUL.

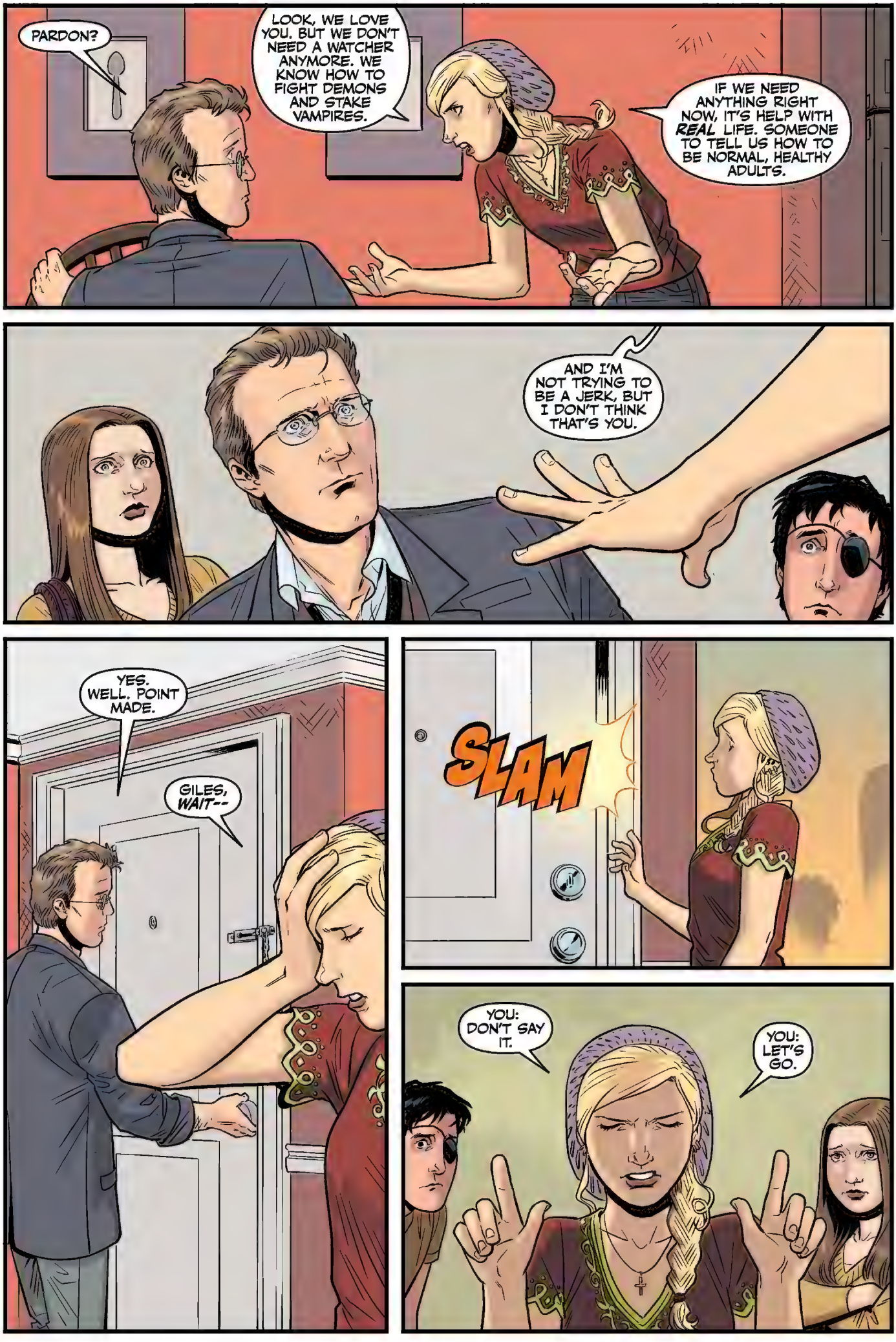

GILES'S APARTMENT. TWO HOURS LATER.
GOING THROUGH PUBERTY IN MINUTES? YOU SURE THE ACNE ALONE WON'T KILL HIM?
IT SHOULD START ANY SECOND NOW.
I DON'T FEEL ANY... HANG ON.
OH, I SAY!
I'M GONNA STABILIZE IT THERE...AS STABLE AS IT'LL GET, ANYWAY. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
WONDERFUL. INCREDIBLE. NAKED.
XANDER, MIGHT I BORROW SOME PANTS?

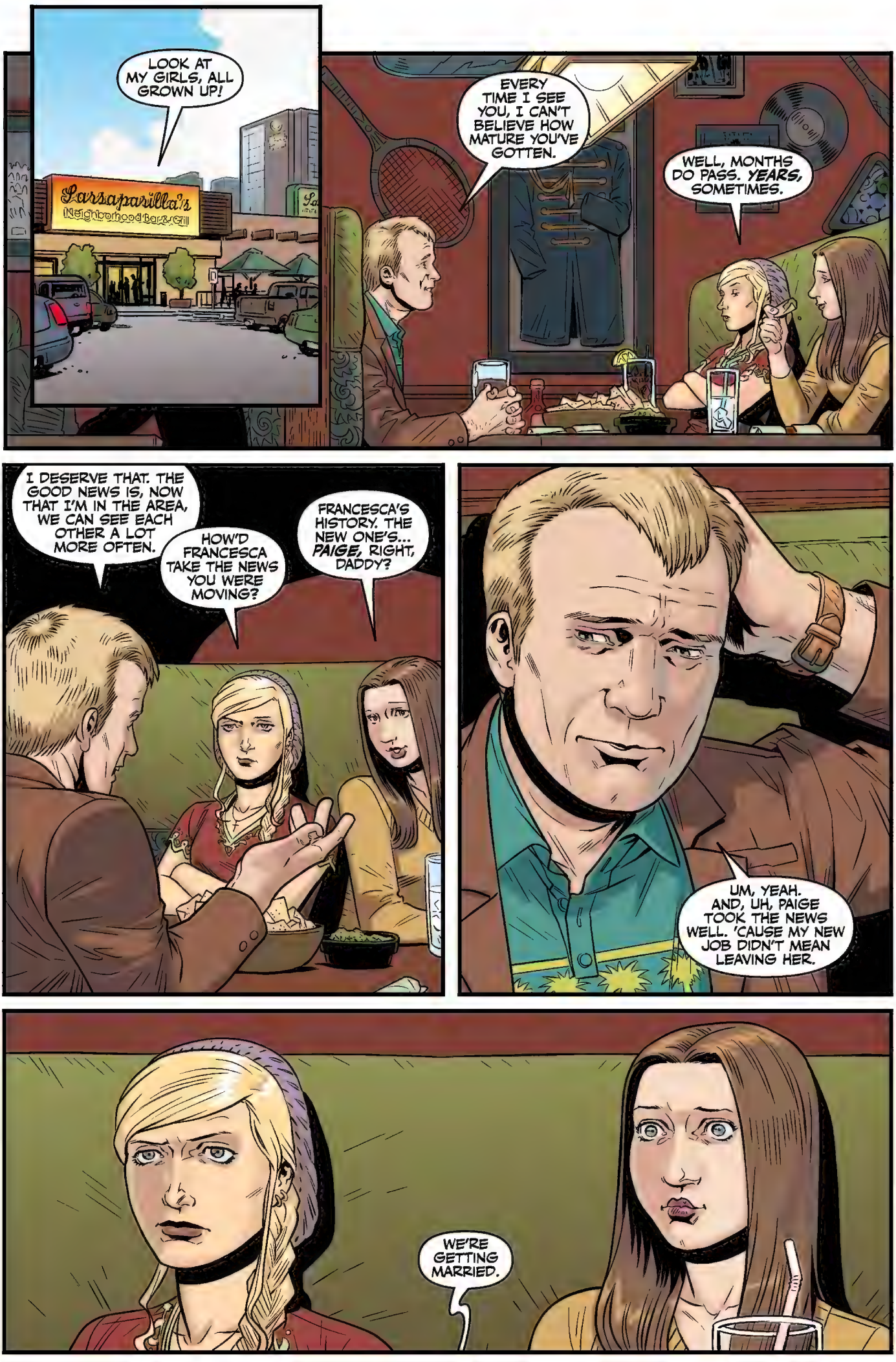
THE LUXE HOTEL
OH MY. YOU SAID YOU'D BE YOUNGER THAN YOUR OLD SELF, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT BARELY LEGAL. IS THIS WHAT YOU LOOKED LIKE DURING YOUR MISSPENT YOUTH?
GOOD LORD, I HOPE I HAD MORE FASHION SENSE. STILL, BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS.
IF BUFFY HADN'T KEPT A PAIR OF MY OLD GLASSES OUT OF SENTIMENTALITY, I'D BE STAGGERING AROUND BLINDLY, TRIPPING OVER CHAIRS LIKE BENNY HILL.
GLENLIVET, AS I RECALL. YOU ARE OVER TWENTY-ONE?
I BELIEVE I HAD A BIRTHDAY IN THE TAXI, YES.
SO...HOW HAS WORK BEEN?
RUPERT. WE CAN TALK ABOUT WORK ANYTIME.
I...DIDN'T WANT TO SEEM TOO EAGER.
TONIGHT...
Please Do Not Disturb
-The Luxe Hotel-
...THERE'S NO SUCH THING.

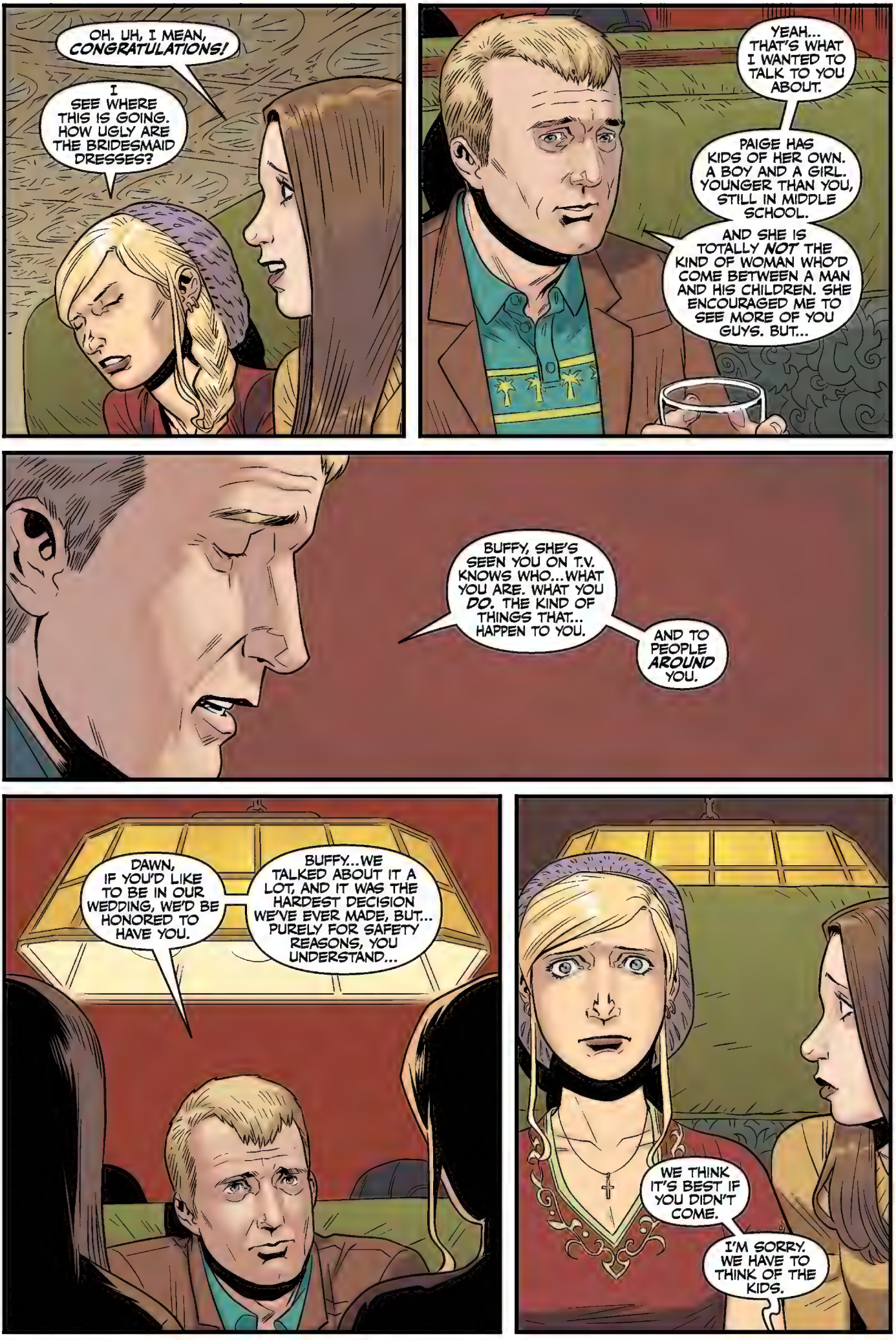

THE NEXT MORNING.
I HAVE MISSED OUR BREAKFASTS IN BED. AND WAKING UP IN YOUR ARMS.
NO LESS THAN I.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE. I'D IMAGINE YOU COULD USE SOME SLEEP.
THANK YOU, BUT SLEEPING SEEMS SUCH A WASTE OF MY CURRENT STATE.
I'D CALL IN SICK, BUT ALL MY BOSSES WILL BE THERE--
NONSENSE. GO. THANK YOU FOR A PERFECT EVENING.
SEE YOU LATER, RUPERT. ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR DAY. I'D IMAGINE THERE'S A LONG LIST OF THINGS YOU CAN'T WAIT TO DO.
HMM. HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT MUCH PAST THIS, ACTUALLY...
TEST DRIVE ME TODAY!
Barnard
RAPID AGING? REALLY, RUPERT, HOW VULGAR.
WHAT IF THERE ARE RESIDUAL EFFECTS? WRINKLES, OR STRETCH MARKS? GOD, YOUR PORES ARE CAVERNOUS!
LOVELY TALKING WITH YOU, AUNTIES. GOODBYE.


GOOD MORNING, ONE AND ALL!
HEY, HEY! YOU LOOK LIKE A FELLA WITH SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT.
A GENTLEMAN NEVER TELLS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK?
OH... OLIVIA HAD TO GO TO WORK.
LOT OF THAT GOING AROUND. SPIKE'S ON A POLICE CASE, AND I'VE GOT MY FINAL INTERVIEW WITH THEO DANIELS TODAY. IF THIS WORKS, I AM ONCE AGAIN GAINFULLY EMPLOYED.
AH! WELL, I MIGHT SUGGEST SOMETHING A BIT MORE... BUSINESSLIKE. A SKIRT, PERHAPS. SUIT JACKET, DEFINITELY.
ONE MUST CONSTANTLY PRESENT THE IMPRESSION OF A SERIOUS, DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL WHO WILL FOCUS ENTIRELY ON THE JOB AT HAND.
THIS ISN'T WALL STREET. THEY HAVE NERF GUNS IN THE OFFICE, YOGA BREAKS... A BALL PIT.
NO SET HOURS, WORK AT YOUR OWN PACE, WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SPARK THE MUSE. THEY WANT YOU TO LOOK CREATIVE, UNIQUE, OUT OF THE BOX. THEY'RE BIG ON THAT.
APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT. BUT I GOT IT COVERED.
YES, I SEE.

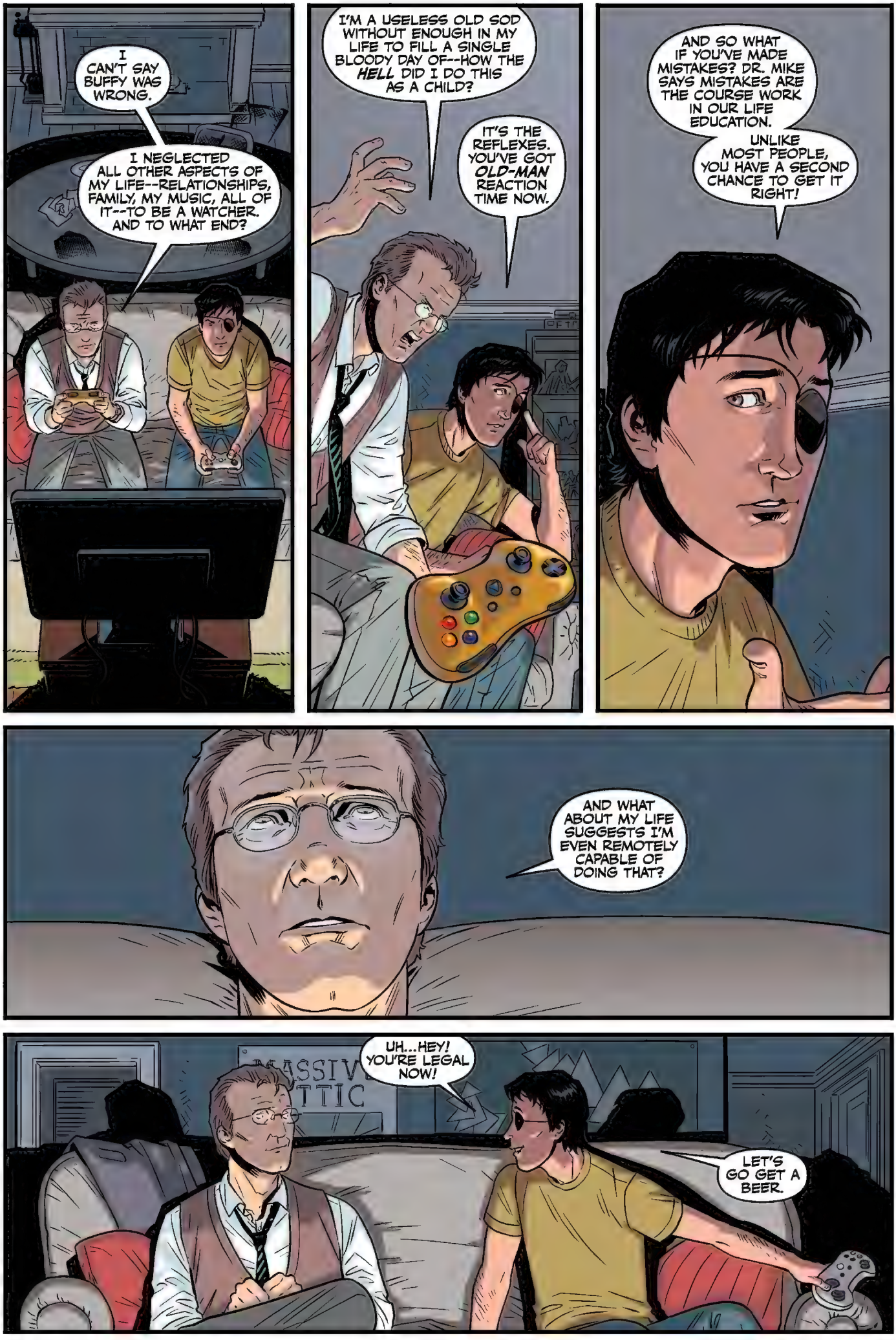
WELL, THEN! I SUPPOSE THE REST OF US MUST RETURN TO TRACKING OUR FUGITIVE DEMON LORDS, EH?
WE COULD SORT THROUGH MY LIBRARY. DETERMINE WHERE THEY MIGHT GO--
ALREADY TRIED. THEY'VE GONE TO GROUND. MIGHT EVEN BE HIDING IN A HELL DIMENSION. WITH THE PORTAL THEY STOLE, THEY CAN COME BACK ANYTIME THEY WANT.
ALREADY DONE. MOST OF THAT STUFF'S ONLINE THESE DAYS. NOW THAT EVERYONE KNOWS THE SUPERNATURAL'S REAL, THE WHOLE WORLD'S STUDYING UP ON IT.
EVERYONE'S AN AMATEUR WATCHER NOW, AM I RIGHT?
OH...I SUPPOSE SO.
YEAH, CONSENSUS SEEMS TO BE THAT WE NEED THEM TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.
DAWN! HUSTLE IT UP! I WANNA GET THIS OVER WITH!
COMING! GEEZ!
AH! LUNCH WITH YOUR ERRANT *PATERFAMILIAS.*
IF I MAY OFFER A WORD OF ADVICE ON THAT SCORE--
GILES, NO OFFENSE...
...BUT I WISH YOU WOULDN'T.


PARDON?
LOOK, WE LOVE YOU. BUT WE DON'T NEED A WATCHER ANYMORE. WE KNOW HOW TO FIGHT DEMONS AND STAKE VAMPIRES.
IF WE NEED ANYTHING RIGHT NOW, IT'S HELP WITH REAL LIFE. SOMEONE TO TELL US HOW TO BE NORMAL, HEALTHY ADULTS.
AND I'M NOT TRYING TO BE A JERK, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S YOU.
YES. WELL. POINT MADE.
GILES, WAIT--
SLAM
YOU: DON'T SAY IT.
YOU: LET'S GO.

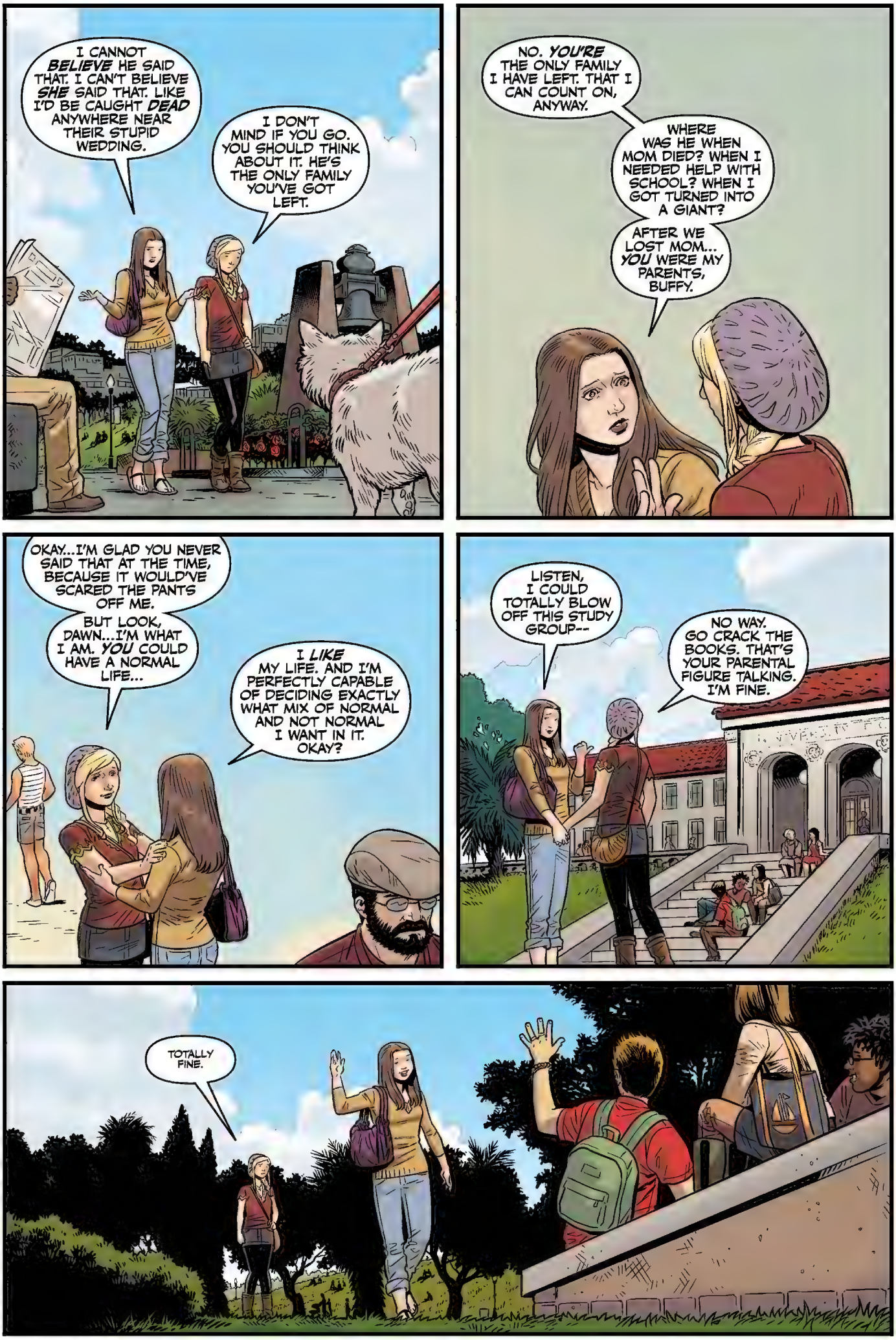

LOOK AT MY GIRLS, ALL GROWN UP!
Sarsaparilla's
Neighborhood Bar & Grill
EVERY TIME I SEE YOU, I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MATURE YOU'VE GOTTEN.
WELL, MONTHS DO PASS. YEARS, SOMETIMES.
I DESERVE THAT. THE GOOD NEWS IS, NOW THAT I'M IN THE AREA, WE CAN SEE EACH OTHER A LOT MORE OFTEN.
HOW'D FRANCESCA TAKE THE NEWS YOU WERE MOVING?
FRANCESCA'S HISTORY. THE NEW ONE'S... PAIGE, RIGHT, DADDY?
UM, YEAH. AND, UH, PAIGE TOOK THE NEWS WELL. 'CAUSE MY NEW JOB DIDN'T MEAN LEAVING HER.
WE'RE GETTING MARRIED.


OH. UH, I MEAN, CONGRATULATIONS!
I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING. HOW UGLY ARE THE BRIDESMAID DRESSES?
YEAH... THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
PAIGE HAS KIDS OF HER OWN. A BOY AND A GIRL. YOUNGER THAN YOU, STILL IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
AND SHE IS TOTALLY NOT THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO'D COME BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS CHILDREN. SHE ENCOURAGED ME TO SEE MORE OF YOU GUYS. BUT...
BUFFY, SHE'S SEEN YOU ON T.V. KNOWS WHO...WHAT YOU ARE. WHAT YOU DO. THE KIND OF THINGS THAT... HAPPEN TO YOU.
AND TO PEOPLE AROUND YOU.
DAWN, IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE IN OUR WEDDING, WE'D BE HONORED TO HAVE YOU.
BUFFY...WE TALKED ABOUT IT A LOT, AND IT WAS THE HARDEST DECISION WE'VE EVER MADE, BUT... PURELY FOR SAFETY REASONS, YOU UNDERSTAND...
WE THINK IT'S BEST IF YOU DIDN'T COME.
I'M SORRY. WE HAVE TO THINK OF THE KIDS.

SHE WANTS ME TO SEE BOTH OF YOU GUYS AS OFTEN AS WE WANT--
It's Beer O'Clock!
OH MY GOD! HOW ABOUT NEVER!
WHAT KIND OF A HORRIBLE PERSON SAYS SOMETHING LIKE THAT? DOES SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
THIS "PAIGE" IS A MEAN, SELFISH, STUCK-UP--AND YOU! YOU'VE DROPPED THE DAD BALL BEFORE, A LOT, BUT--
BUT THEY'RE NOT WRONG.
ARE THEY?
TARA. ANYA. JENNY CALENDAR.
GILES.
THEY'RE NOT WRONG.

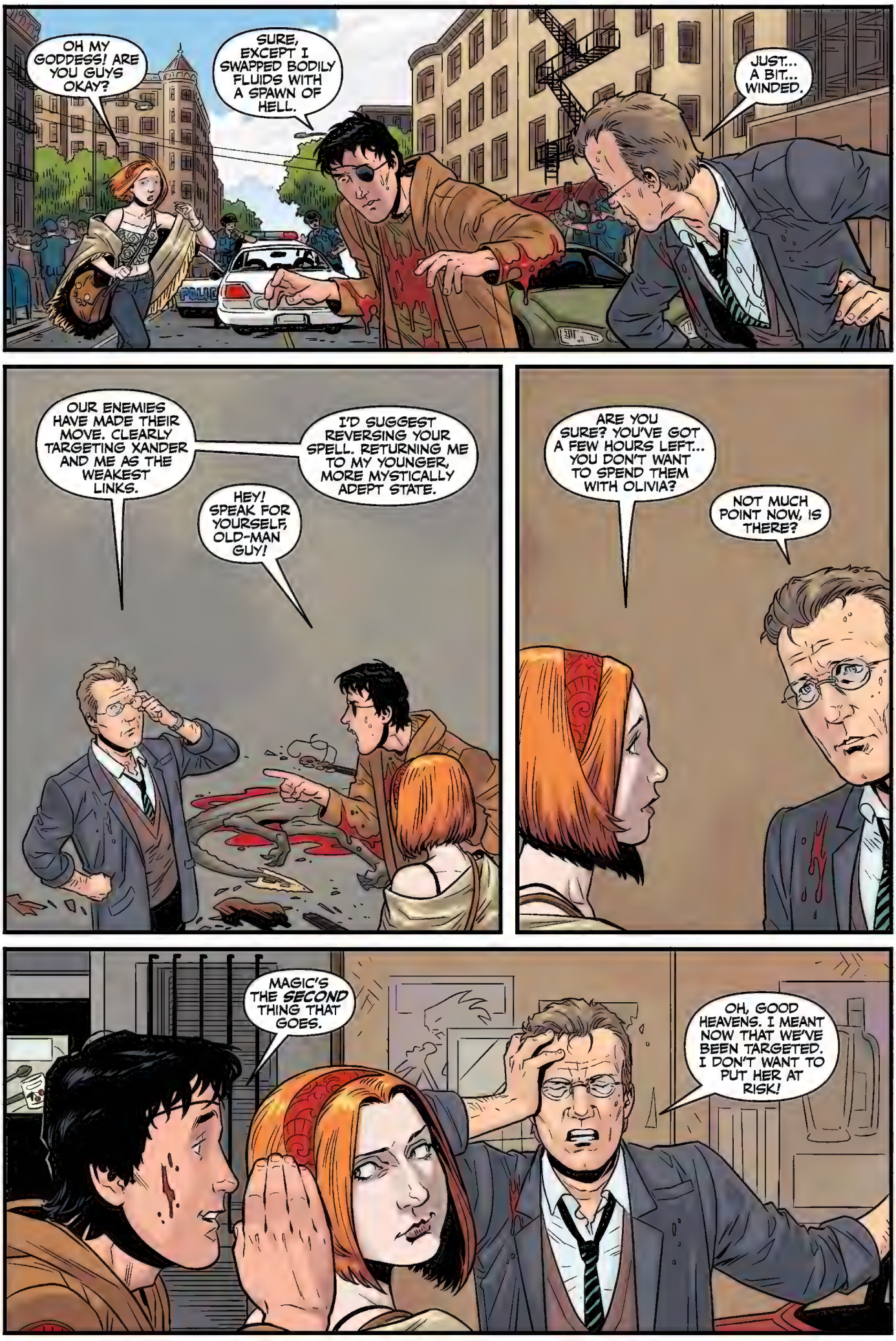

I CAN'T SAY BUFFY WAS WRONG.
I NEGLECTED ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF MY LIFE--RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY, MY MUSIC, ALL OF IT--TO BE A WATCHER. AND TO WHAT END?
I'M A USELESS OLD SOD WITHOUT ENOUGH IN MY LIFE TO FILL A SINGLE BLOODY DAY OF--HOW THE *HELL* DID I DO THIS AS A CHILD?
IT'S THE REFLEXES. YOU'VE GOT *OLD-MAN* REACTION TIME NOW.
AND SO WHAT IF YOU'VE MADE MISTAKES? DR. MIKE SAYS MISTAKES ARE THE COURSE WORK IN OUR LIFE EDUCATION.
UNLIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOU HAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT!
AND WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE SUGGESTS I'M EVEN REMOTELY CAPABLE OF DOING THAT?
UH...HEY! YOU'RE LEGAL NOW!
LET'S GO GET A BEER.

DAMN, I CAN TELL YOU'RE GETTING OLDER. YOU'RE PASSING GAS LIKE MY UNCLE, WHOSE DIET STAPLES ARE CABBAGE AND WHISKEY.
THAT IS CERTAINLY NOT ME. IT SMELLS LIKE SULFUR...
Ed's Pawn
A PORTAL. THEY'RE MAKING THEIR MOVE.
XANDER...
Ed's Pawn & Gold
SSTHHAAA!
...RUN!

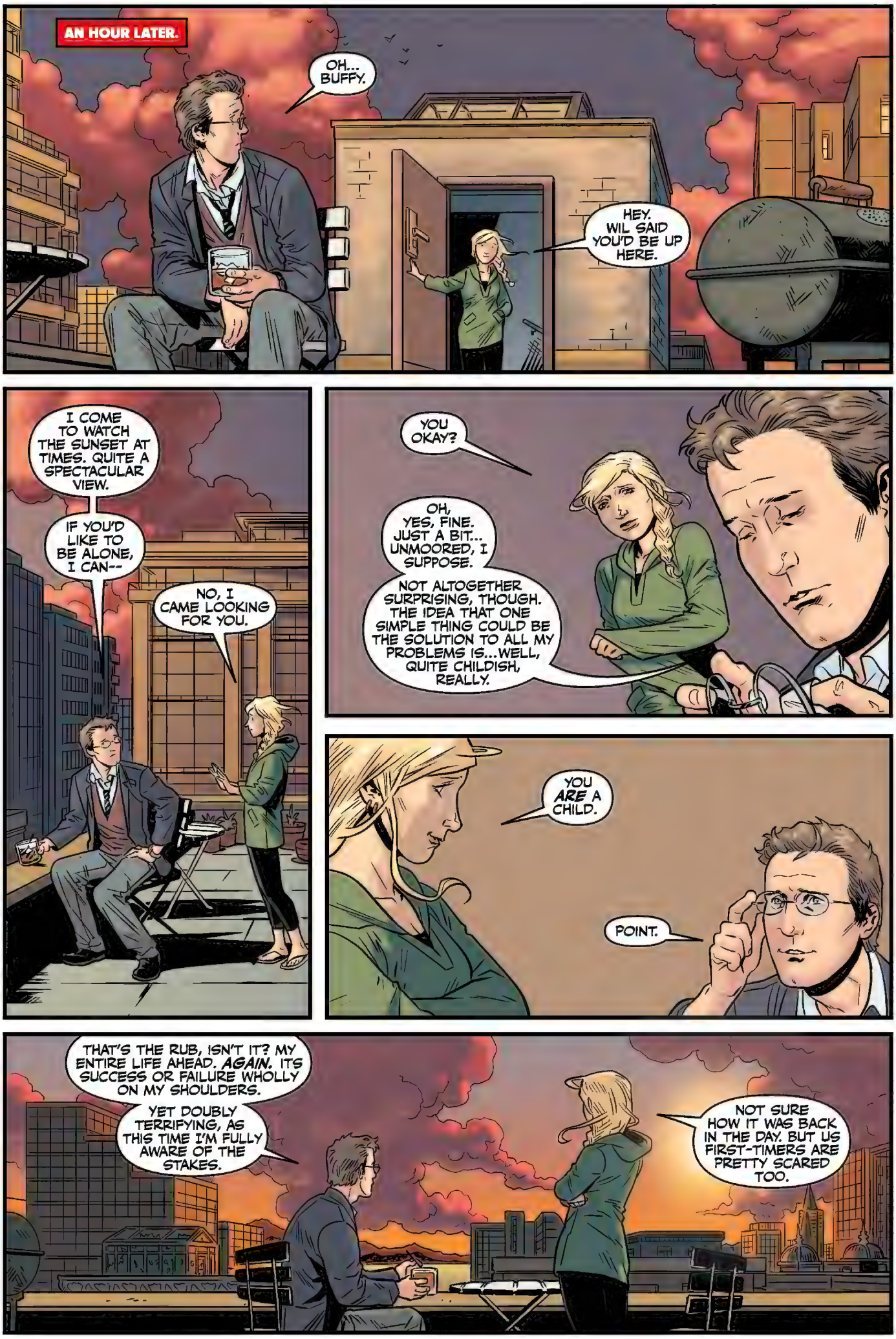

I CANNOT BELIEVE HE SAID THAT. I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE SAID THAT. LIKE I'D BE CAUGHT DEAD ANYWHERE NEAR THEIR STUPID WEDDING.
I DON'T MIND IF YOU GO. YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT IT. HE'S THE ONLY FAMILY YOU'VE GOT LEFT.
NO. YOU'RE THE ONLY FAMILY I HAVE LEFT. THAT I CAN COUNT ON, ANYWAY.
WHERE WAS HE WHEN MOM DIED? WHEN I NEEDED HELP WITH SCHOOL? WHEN I GOT TURNED INTO A GIANT?
AFTER WE LOST MOM... YOU WERE MY PARENTS, BUFFY.
OKAY...I'M GLAD YOU NEVER SAID THAT AT THE TIME, BECAUSE IT WOULD'VE SCARED THE PANTS OFF ME.
BUT LOOK, DAWN...I'M WHAT I AM. YOU COULD HAVE A NORMAL LIFE...
I LIKE MY LIFE. AND I'M PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF DECIDING EXACTLY WHAT MIX OF NORMAL AND NOT NORMAL I WANT IN IT. OKAY?
LISTEN, I COULD TOTALLY BLOW OFF THIS STUDY GROUP--
NO WAY. GO CRACK THE BOOKS. THAT'S YOUR PARENTAL FIGURE TALKING. I'M FINE.
TOTALLY FINE.

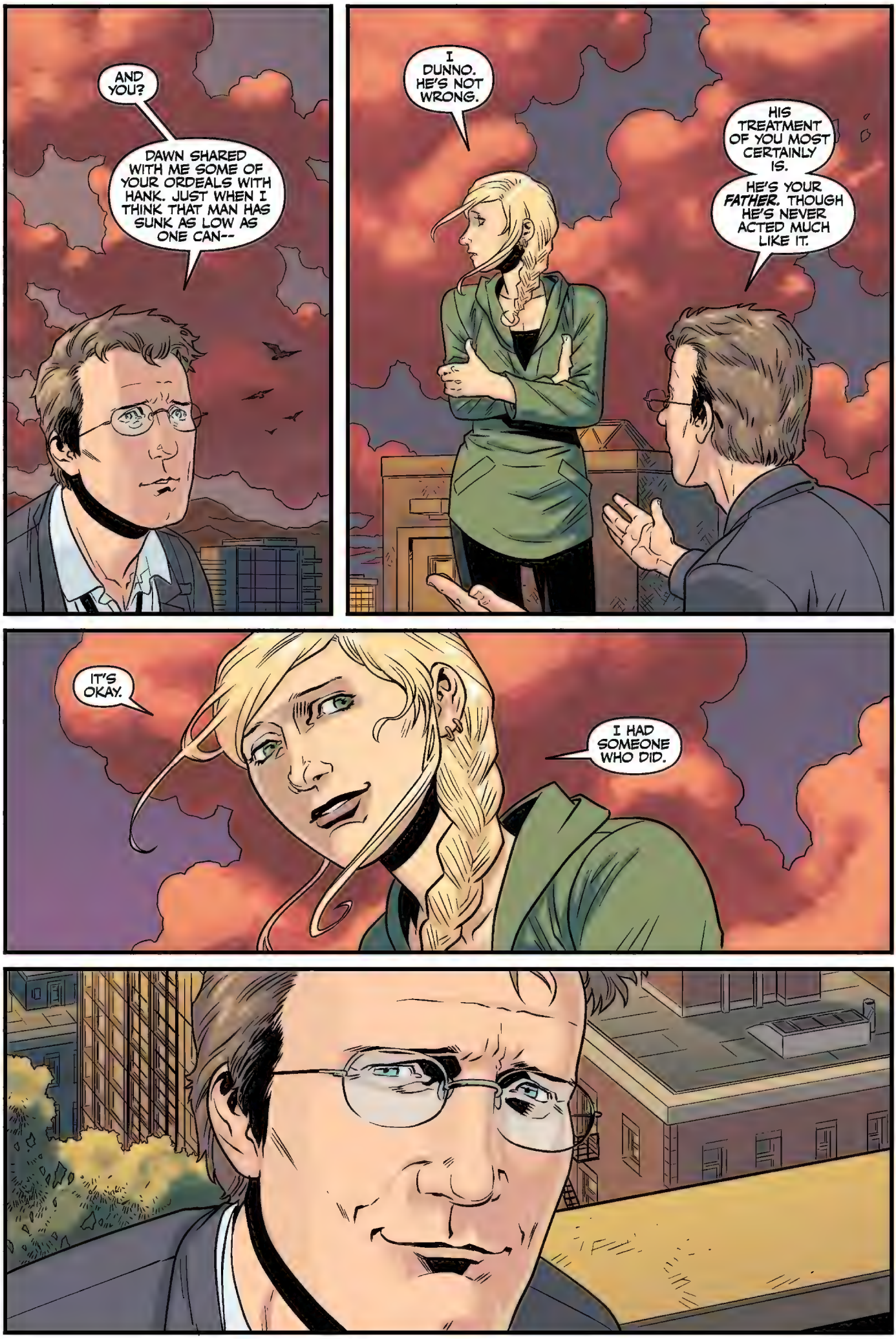
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOUR SPELLS ARE TOTAL WEAK SAUCE!
IT MUST BE THE RAPID AGING! I HAVEN'T DEVELOPED MY MAGIC SKILLS, SO THEY'VE ATROPHIED!
WELL, TAKE SOME MAGIC VIAGRA, OR WE'RE TOAST!
I--I--
GHHRRR
ANY TIME NOW WOULD BE GREAT!

RIGHT.
KSSHH
SOME SKILLS...
BRAKAMMM
...YOU NEVER LOSE!
SHRREEEE!

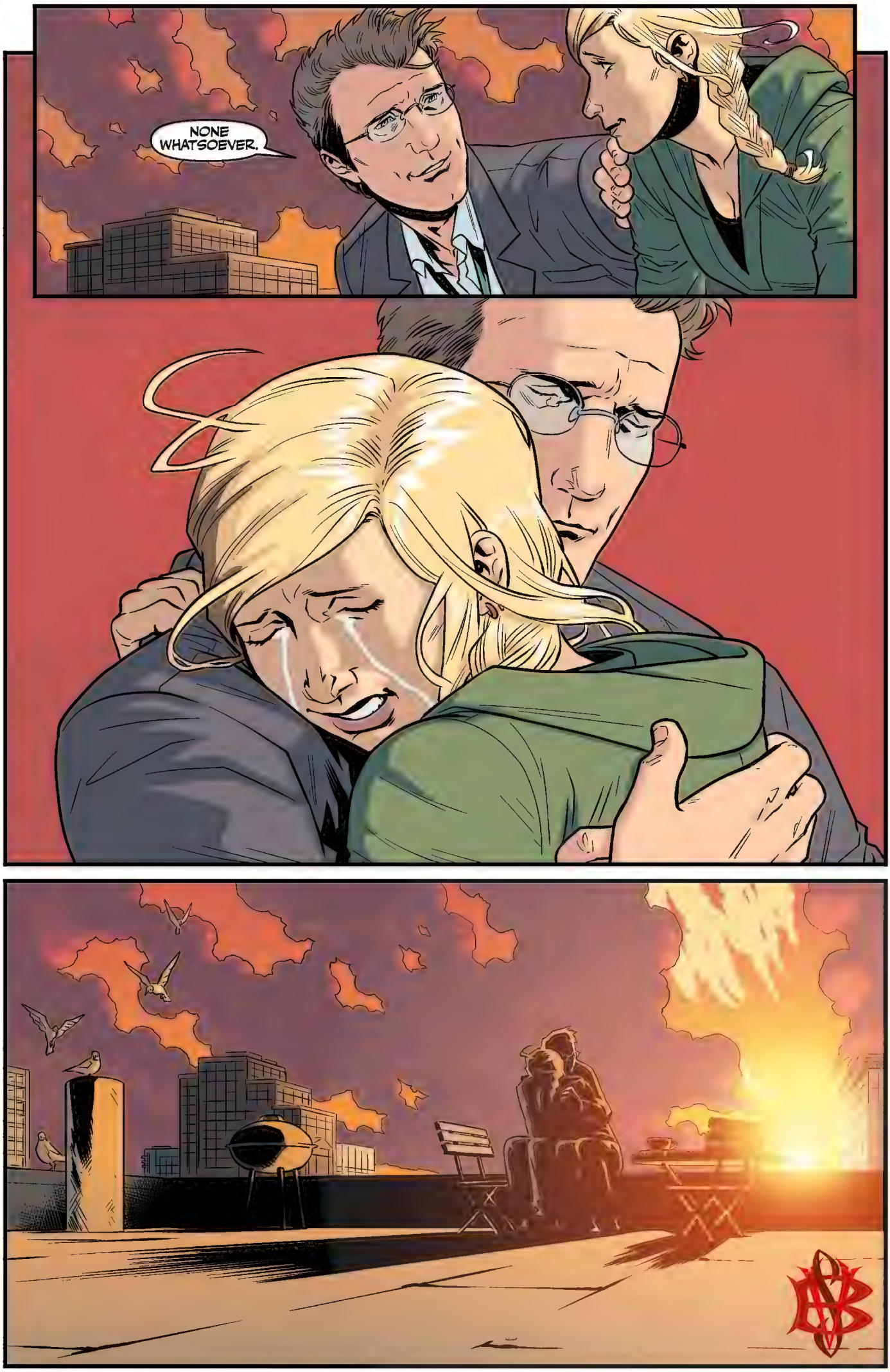

OH MY GODDESS! ARE YOU GUYS OKAY?
SURE, EXCEPT I SWAPPED BODILY FLUIDS WITH A SPAWN OF HELL.
JUST... A BIT... WINDED.
OUR ENEMIES HAVE MADE THEIR MOVE. CLEARLY TARGETING XANDER AND ME AS THE WEAKEST LINKS.
I'D SUGGEST REVERSING YOUR SPELL. RETURNING ME TO MY YOUNGER, MORE MYSTICALLY ADEPT STATE.
HEY! SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, OLD-MAN GUY!
ARE YOU SURE? YOU'VE GOT A FEW HOURS LEFT... YOU DON'T WANT TO SPEND THEM WITH OLIVIA?
NOT MUCH POINT NOW, IS THERE?
MAGIC'S THE *SECOND* THING THAT GOES.
OH, GOOD HEAVENS. I MEANT NOW THAT WE'VE BEEN TARGETED. I DON'T WANT TO PUT HER AT RISK!

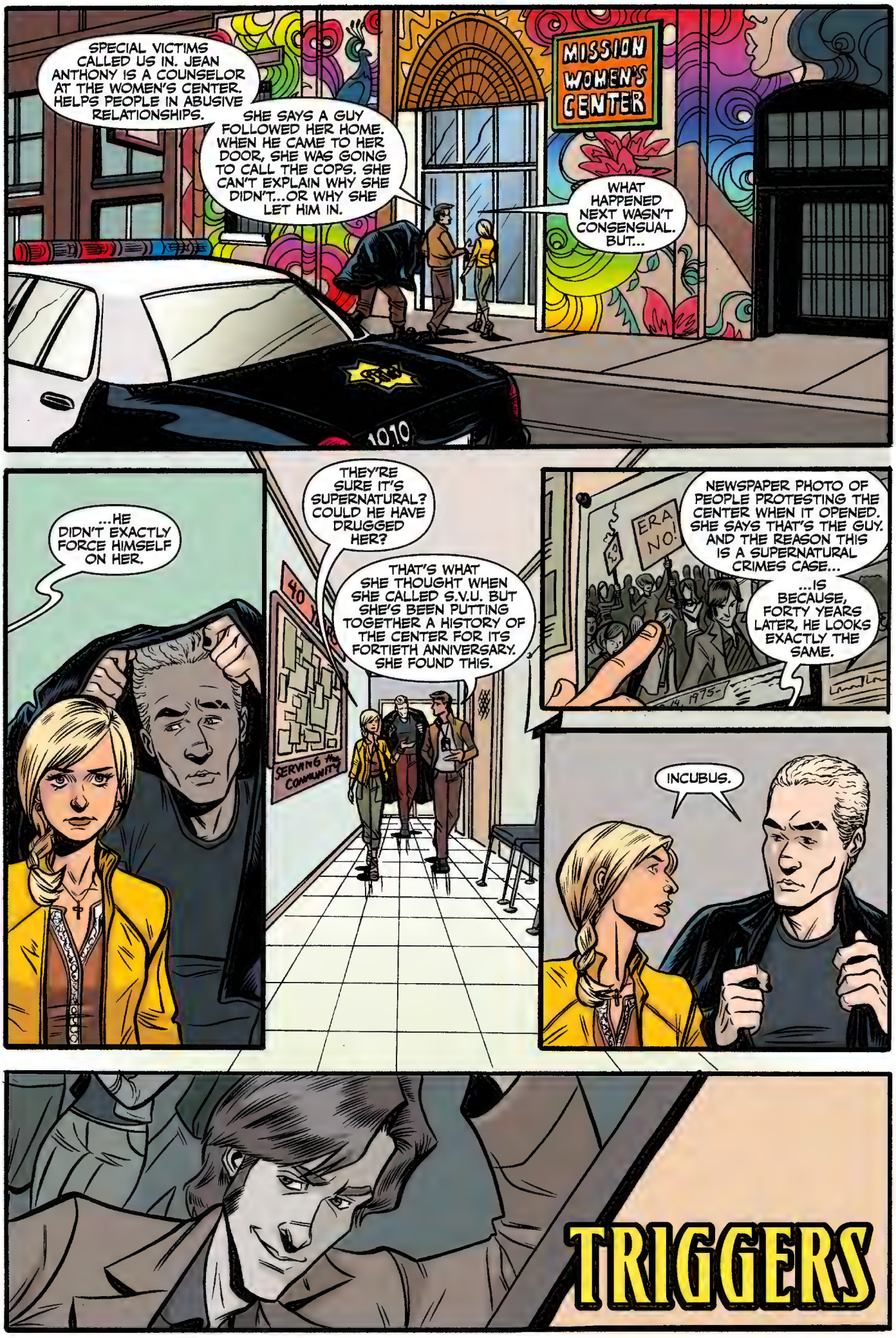
OKAY, LET'S DO IT. SORRY YOUR ADULTHOOD GOT CUT SHORT.
I'LL KEEP LOOKING FOR A WAY TO DO IT MORE GRADUALLY...AND *PERMANENTLY.*
YES, THANK YOU. THAT...
...THAT WOULD BE MARVELOUS.


AN HOUR LATER.
OH... BUFFY.
HEY. WIL SAID YOU'D BE UP HERE.
I COME TO WATCH THE SUNSET AT TIMES. QUITE A SPECTACULAR VIEW.
IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE ALONE, I CAN--
NO, I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU.
YOU OKAY?
OH, YES, FINE. JUST A BIT... UNMOORED, I SUPPOSE.
NOT ALTOGETHER SURPRISING, THOUGH. THE IDEA THAT ONE SIMPLE THING COULD BE THE SOLUTION TO ALL MY PROBLEMS IS...WELL, QUITE CHILDISH, REALLY.
YOU *ARE* A CHILD.
POINT.
THAT'S THE RUB, ISN'T IT? MY ENTIRE LIFE AHEAD. *AGAIN.* ITS SUCCESS OR FAILURE WHOLLY ON MY SHOULDERS.
YET DOUBLY TERRIFYING, AS THIS TIME I'M FULLY AWARE OF THE STAKES.
NOT SURE HOW IT WAS BACK IN THE DAY. BUT US FIRST-TIMERS ARE PRETTY SCARED TOO.

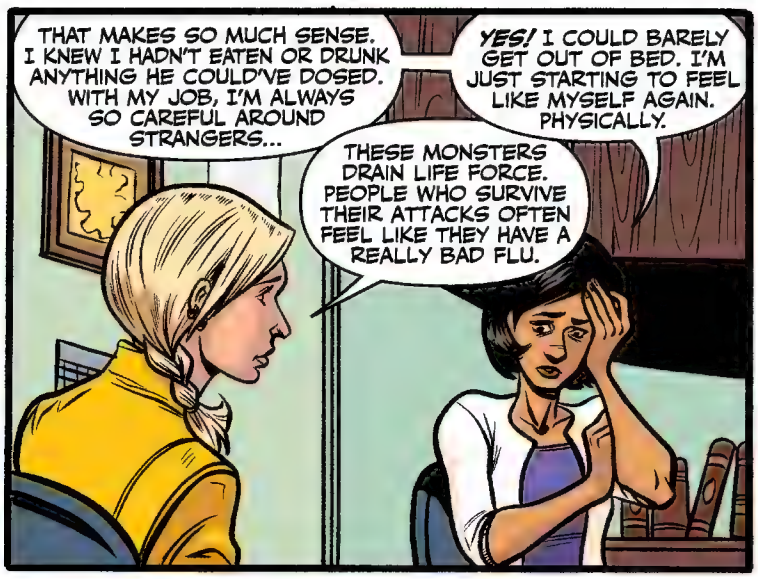

AND YOU?
DAWN SHARED WITH ME SOME OF YOUR ORDEALS WITH HANK. JUST WHEN I THINK THAT MAN HAS SUNK AS LOW AS ONE CAN--
I DUNNO. HE'S NOT WRONG.
HIS TREATMENT OF YOU MOST CERTAINLY IS.
HE'S YOUR *FATHER.* THOUGH HE'S NEVER ACTED MUCH LIKE IT.
IT'S OKAY.
I HAD SOMEONE WHO DID.

YOU WERE RIGHT, THOUGH... WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER.
OH, GOD, I WAS SUCH A--
YOU KNOW I DIDN'T MEAN THAT ABOUT *YOU*, RIGHT? IT WAS MY DAD--
NEVERTHELESS, YOU WERE INDEED CORRECT. YOU ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE OF FORGING A PATH ON YOUR OWN.
YOU ARE AN *EXCEPTIONAL* WOMAN. YOU DO NOT NEED HANK, ME, OR ANYONE ELSE.
YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT. I KNOW.
THANKS.
SO...HOW MUCH LONGER YOU GONNA BE LIKE THIS?
WILLOW'S ALREADY REVERSED THE SPELL, SO...PERHAPS ANOTHER HOUR OR TWO.
GOT ANY PLANS?


NONE WHATSOEVER.


SPECIAL VICTIMS CALLED US IN. JEAN ANTHONY IS A COUNSELOR AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER. HELPS PEOPLE IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS.
SHE SAYS A GUY FOLLOWED HER HOME. WHEN HE CAME TO HER DOOR, SHE WAS GOING TO CALL THE COPS. SHE CAN'T EXPLAIN WHY SHE DIDN'T...OR WHY SHE LET HIM IN.
MISSION WOMEN'S CENTER
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WASN'T CONSENSUAL. BUT...
1010
...HE DIDN'T EXACTLY FORCE HIMSELF ON HER.
THEY'RE SURE IT'S SUPERNATURAL? COULD HE HAVE DRUGGED HER?
THAT'S WHAT SHE THOUGHT WHEN SHE CALLED S.V.U. BUT SHE'S BEEN PUTTING TOGETHER A HISTORY OF THE CENTER FOR ITS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY. SHE FOUND THIS.
40 YEARS
SERVING the COMMUNITY
ERA NO!
NEWSPAPER PHOTO OF PEOPLE PROTESTING THE CENTER WHEN IT OPENED. SHE SAYS THAT'S THE GUY. AND THE REASON THIS IS A SUPERNATURAL CRIMES CASE...
...IS BECAUSE, FORTY YEARS LATER, HE LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME.
INCUBUS.
TRIGGERS

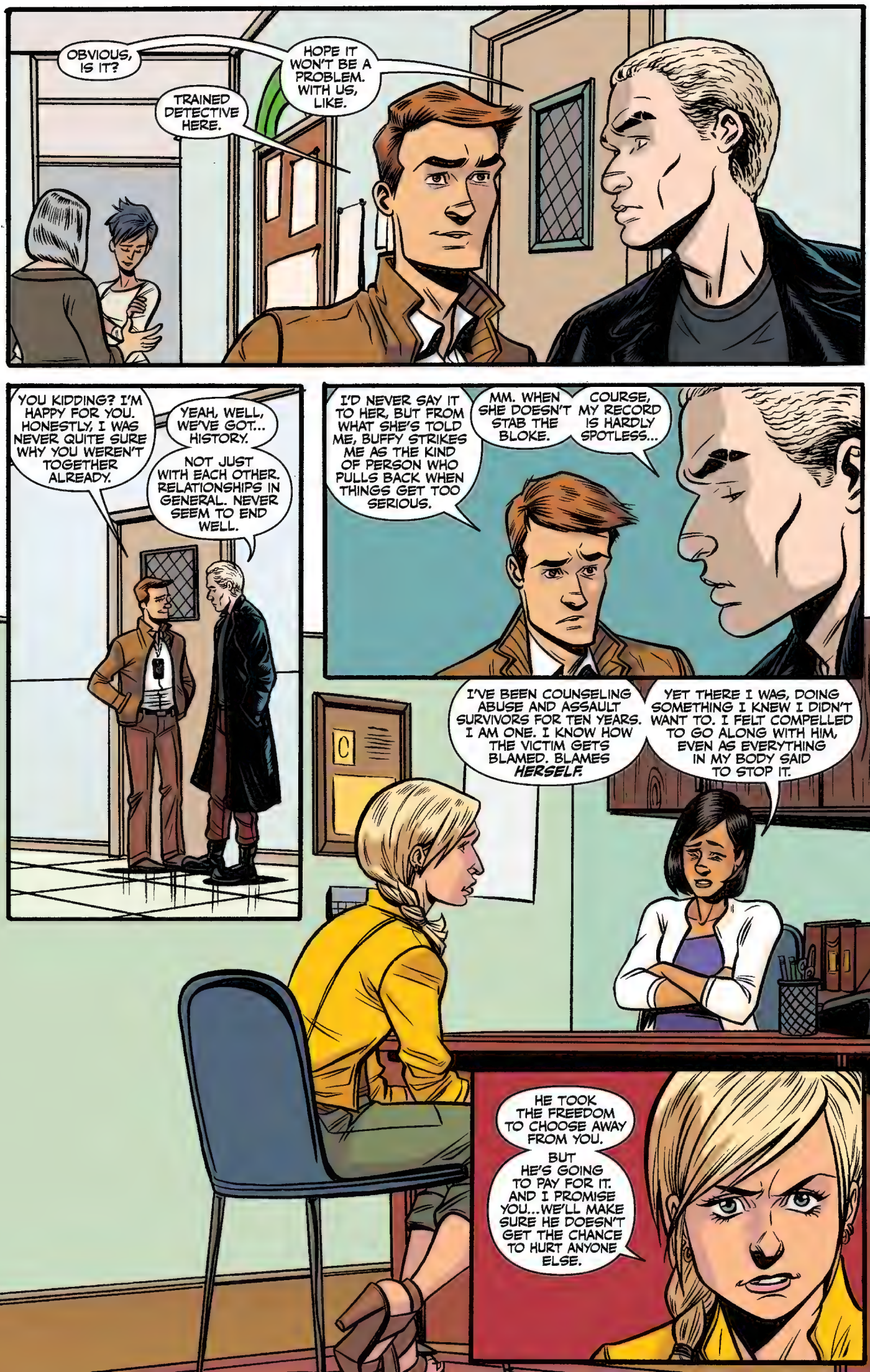
WHEN HE LEFT I ASKED WHEN I COULD SEE HIM AGAIN. FIVE MINUTES LATER I WAS HORRIFIED. TOTALLY DISGUSTED. YOU'RE SAYING HE WAS... WHAT, MAGIC?
AN INCUBUS IS A DEMON THAT FEEDS ON LIFE ENERGY THROUGH, AH, INTIMATE CONTACT. THEY HAVE AN... EFFECT ON PEOPLE. "HYPNOTIC" IS UNDERSTATING IT.

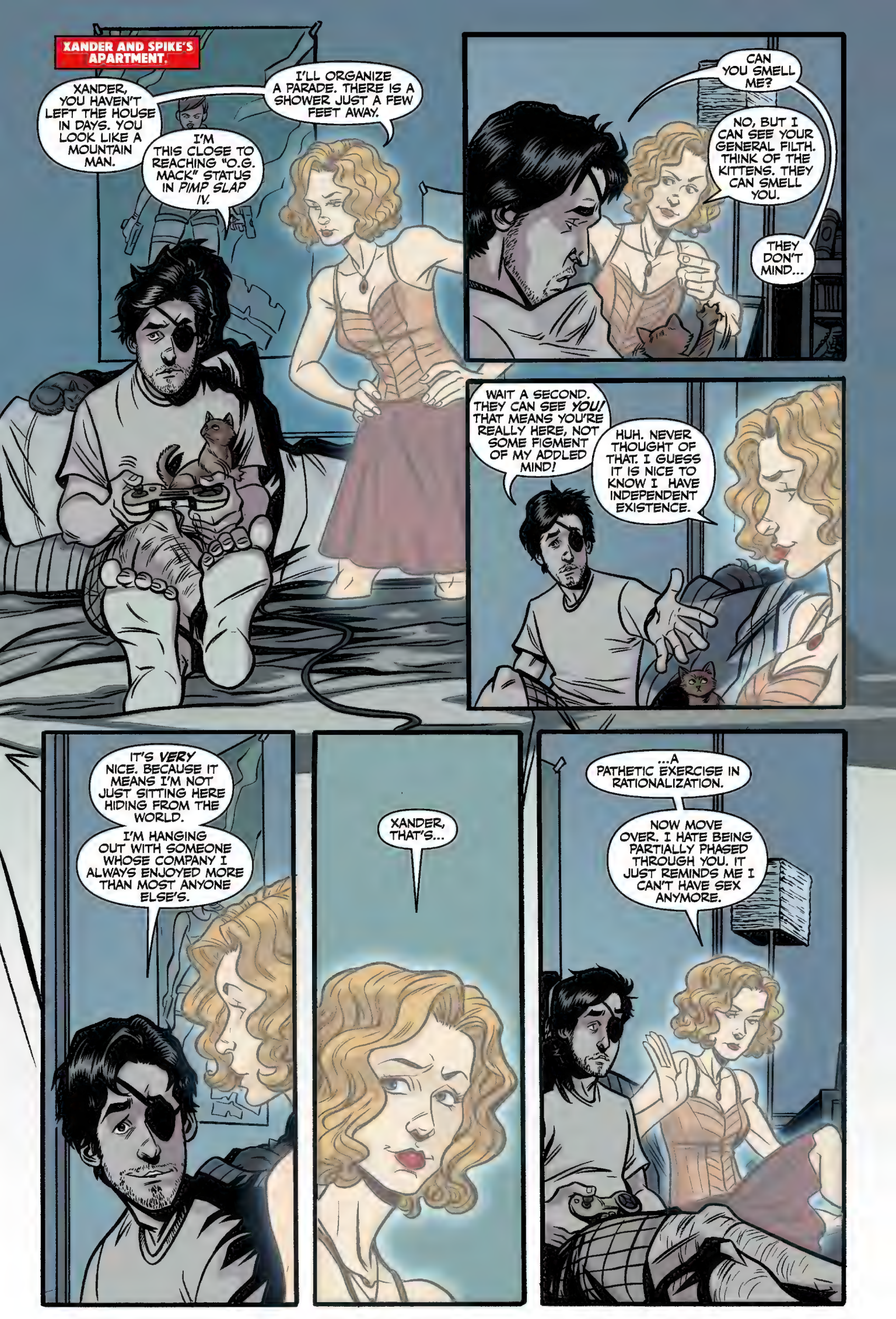

THAT MAKES SO MUCH SENSE. I KNEW I HADN'T EATEN OR DRUNK ANYTHING HE COULD'VE DOSED. WITH MY JOB, I'M ALWAYS SO CAREFUL AROUND STRANGERS...
YES! I COULD BARELY GET OUT OF BED. I'M JUST STARTING TO FEEL LIKE MYSELF AGAIN. PHYSICALLY.
THESE MONSTERS DRAIN LIFE FORCE. PEOPLE WHO SURVIVE THEIR ATTACKS OFTEN FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A REALLY BAD FLU.

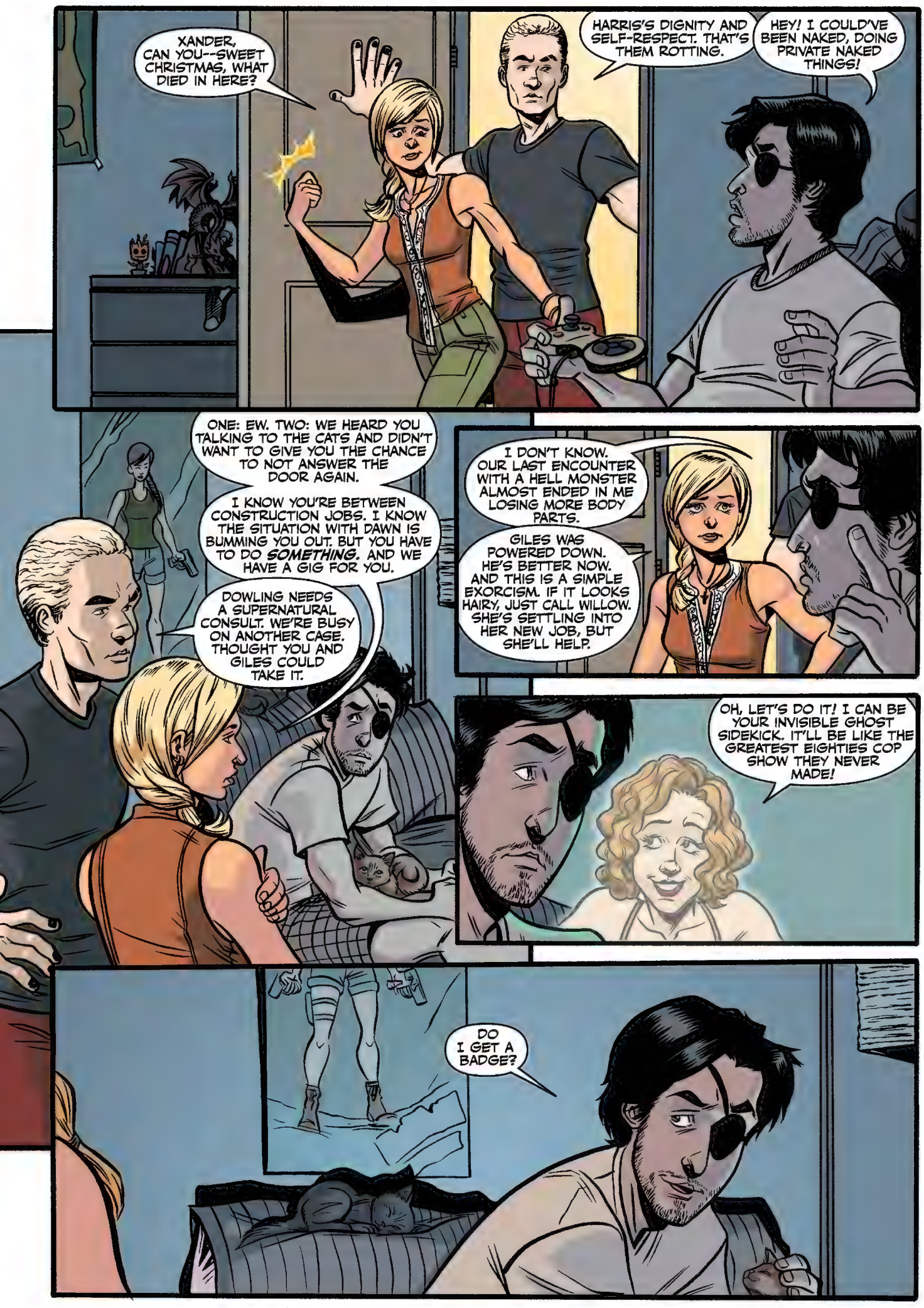
I'M SO SORRY THIS HAPPENED. WE'LL GET HIM.
THANK YOU. I WAS SO... SO ANGRY WITH MYSELF. I THOUGHT I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO PROSECUTE, BECAUSE...

COULD WE TALK ALONE?
SURE.

SO. THE TWO OF YOU? FOR REAL, AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

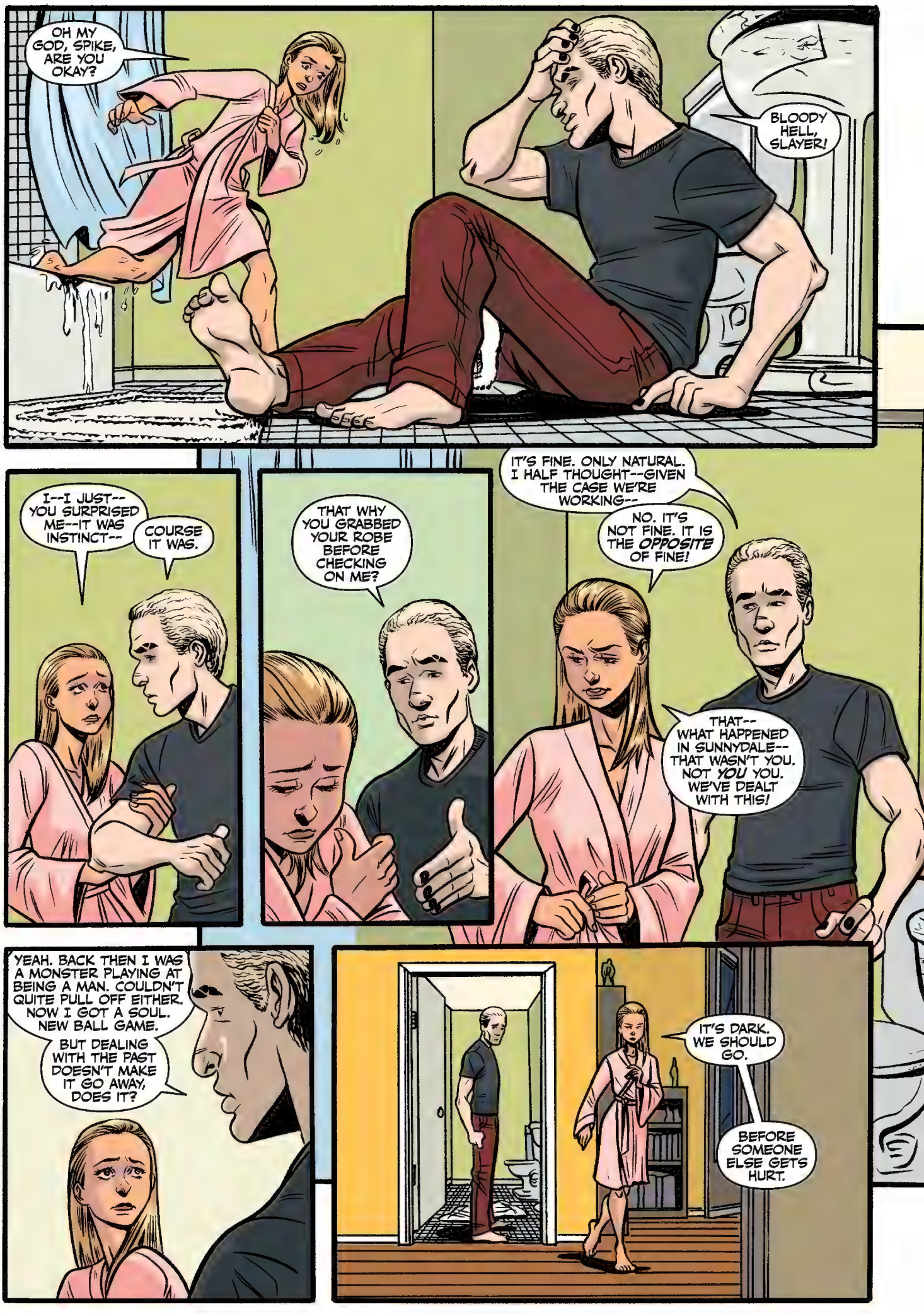

OBVIOUS, IS IT?
TRAINED DETECTIVE HERE.
HOPE IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM. WITH US, LIKE.
YOU KIDDING? I'M HAPPY FOR YOU. HONESTLY, I WAS NEVER QUITE SURE WHY YOU WEREN'T TOGETHER ALREADY.
YEAH, WELL, WE'VE GOT... HISTORY.
NOT JUST WITH EACH OTHER. RELATIONSHIPS IN GENERAL. NEVER SEEM TO END WELL.
I'D NEVER SAY IT TO HER, BUT FROM WHAT SHE'S TOLD ME, BUFFY STRIKES ME AS THE KIND OF PERSON WHO PULLS BACK WHEN THINGS GET TOO SERIOUS.
MM. WHEN SHE DOESN'T STAB THE BLOKE.
COURSE, MY RECORD IS HARDLY SPOTLESS...
I'VE BEEN COUNSELING ABUSE AND ASSAULT SURVIVORS FOR TEN YEARS. I AM ONE. I KNOW HOW THE VICTIM GETS BLAMED. BLAMES *HERSELF.*
YET THERE I WAS, DOING SOMETHING I KNEW I DIDN'T WANT TO. I FELT COMPELLED TO GO ALONG WITH HIM, EVEN AS EVERYTHING IN MY BODY SAID TO STOP IT.
HE TOOK THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE AWAY FROM YOU.
BUT HE'S GOING TO PAY FOR IT. AND I PROMISE YOU...WE'LL MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T GET THE CHANCE TO HURT ANYONE ELSE.


XANDER AND SPIKE'S APARTMENT.
XANDER, YOU HAVEN'T LEFT THE HOUSE IN DAYS. YOU LOOK LIKE A MOUNTAIN MAN.
I'M THIS CLOSE TO REACHING "O.G. MACK" STATUS IN PIMP SLAP IV.
I'LL ORGANIZE A PARADE. THERE IS A SHOWER JUST A FEW FEET AWAY.
CAN YOU SMELL ME?
NO, BUT I CAN SEE YOUR GENERAL FILTH. THINK OF THE KITTENS. THEY CAN SMELL YOU.
THEY DON'T MIND...
WAIT A SECOND. THEY CAN SEE YOU! THAT MEANS YOU'RE REALLY HERE, NOT SOME FIGMENT OF MY ADDLED MIND!
HUH. NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT. I GUESS IT IS NICE TO KNOW I HAVE INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE.
IT'S VERY NICE. BECAUSE IT MEANS I'M NOT JUST SITTING HERE HIDING FROM THE WORLD.
I'M HANGING OUT WITH SOMEONE WHOSE COMPANY I ALWAYS ENJOYED MORE THAN MOST ANYONE ELSE'S.
XANDER, THAT'S...
...A PATHETIC EXERCISE IN RATIONALIZATION.
NOW MOVE OVER. I HATE BEING PARTIALLY PHASED THROUGH YOU. IT JUST REMINDS ME I CAN'T HAVE SEX ANYMORE.


XANDER, CAN YOU--SWEET CHRISTMAS, WHAT DIED IN HERE?
HARRIS'S DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT. THAT'S THEM ROTTING.
HEY! I COULD'VE BEEN NAKED, DOING PRIVATE NAKED THINGS!
ONE: EW. TWO: WE HEARD YOU TALKING TO THE CATS AND DIDN'T WANT TO GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO NOT ANSWER THE DOOR AGAIN.
I KNOW YOU'RE BETWEEN CONSTRUCTION JOBS. I KNOW THE SITUATION WITH DAWN IS BUMMING YOU OUT. BUT YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING. AND WE HAVE A GIG FOR YOU.
DOWLING NEEDS A SUPERNATURAL CONSULT. WE'RE BUSY ON ANOTHER CASE. THOUGHT YOU AND GILES COULD TAKE IT.
I DON'T KNOW. OUR LAST ENCOUNTER WITH A HELL MONSTER ALMOST ENDED IN ME LOSING MORE BODY PARTS.
GILES WAS POWERED DOWN. HE'S BETTER NOW. AND THIS IS A SIMPLE EXORCISM. IF IT LOOKS HAIRY, JUST CALL WILLOW. SHE'S SETTLING INTO HER NEW JOB, BUT SHE'LL HELP.
OH, LET'S DO IT! I CAN BE YOUR INVISIBLE GHOST SIDEKICK. IT'LL BE LIKE THE GREATEST EIGHTIES COP SHOW THEY NEVER MADE!
DO I GET A BADGE?

THE HAIGHT.
I WAS PROMISED A BADGE.
THERE WILL BE NO BADGE. YOU CAN KEEP THE WINDBREAKER, THOUGH.
I CAN DETERMINE SIMPLY FROM THE SIGN THAT THE PROPRIETOR OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT IS A CHARLATAN AND A FRAUD.
THAT'S THE CONSENSUS. PRETTY GOOD AT THE COLD-READING SCAM, FROM WHAT I HEAR, BUT A FAKE.
STILL, SHE'S BEEN ACTING WEIRD. EVER SINCE HER LAST SÉANCE.
PSYCHIC
CLOSED
I'LL NEED TO SPEAK TO THIS "PSYCHIC."
YEAH, THAT'S KINDA THE IDEA. GET READY.
MS. PASTERNAK? LANA?
LANA ISN'T HERE RIGHT NOW.

RIGHT. BETWEEN DOWLING'S SEARCH OF COLD-CASE RECORDS AND THE TRUSTY OLD INTERNET, SIGNS POINT TO OUR INCUBUS HAUNTING THE MISSION DISTRICT FOR DECADES.
HE'LL BE OUT AND ABOUT SOON. THEY AREN'T RESTRICTED TO NIGHTTIME, BUT THEY PREFER IT.
BE READY IN A JIFF.
SAY, LUV, MIND IF I CLIMB IN THERE WITH YOU? I COULD USE A RINSE MYSELF.
I'M ALREADY FINISHED.
ACES. THEN I'LL POP IN BEFORE THE WATER GOES...
...COLD--
WHAK

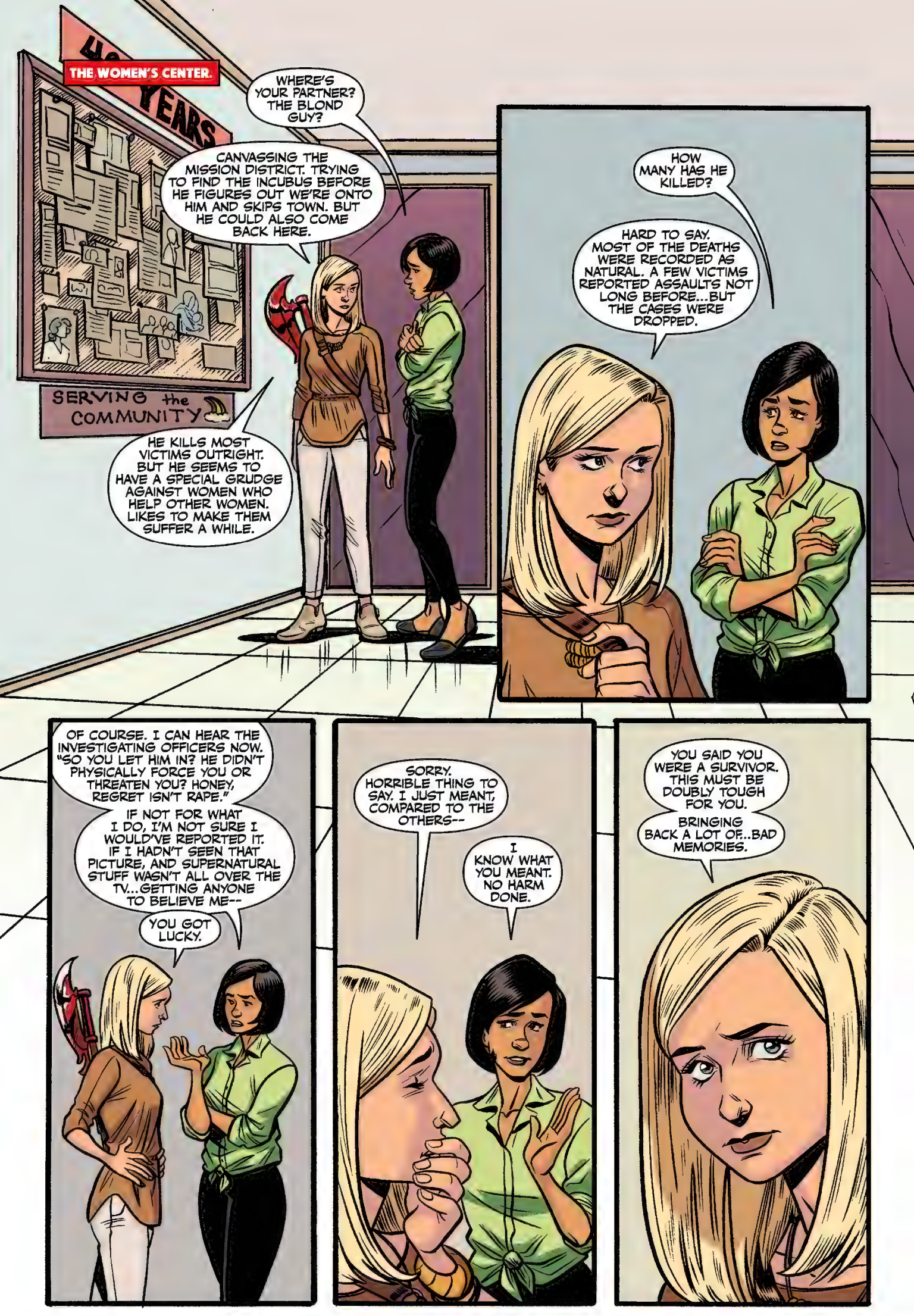

OH MY GOD, SPIKE, ARE YOU OKAY?
BLOODY HELL, SLAYER!
I--I JUST-- YOU SURPRISED ME--IT WAS INSTINCT--
COURSE IT WAS.
THAT WHY YOU GRABBED YOUR ROBE BEFORE CHECKING ON ME?
IT'S FINE. ONLY NATURAL. I HALF THOUGHT--GIVEN THE CASE WE'RE WORKING--
NO. IT'S NOT FINE. IT IS THE *OPPOSITE* OF FINE!
THAT-- WHAT HAPPENED IN SUNNYDALE-- THAT WASN'T YOU. NOT *YOU* YOU. WE'VE DEALT WITH THIS!
YEAH. BACK THEN I WAS A MONSTER PLAYING AT BEING A MAN. COULDN'T QUITE PULL OFF EITHER. NOW I GOT A SOUL. NEW BALL GAME.
BUT DEALING WITH THE PAST DOESN'T MAKE IT GO AWAY, DOES IT?
IT'S DARK. WE SHOULD GO.
BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE GETS HURT.

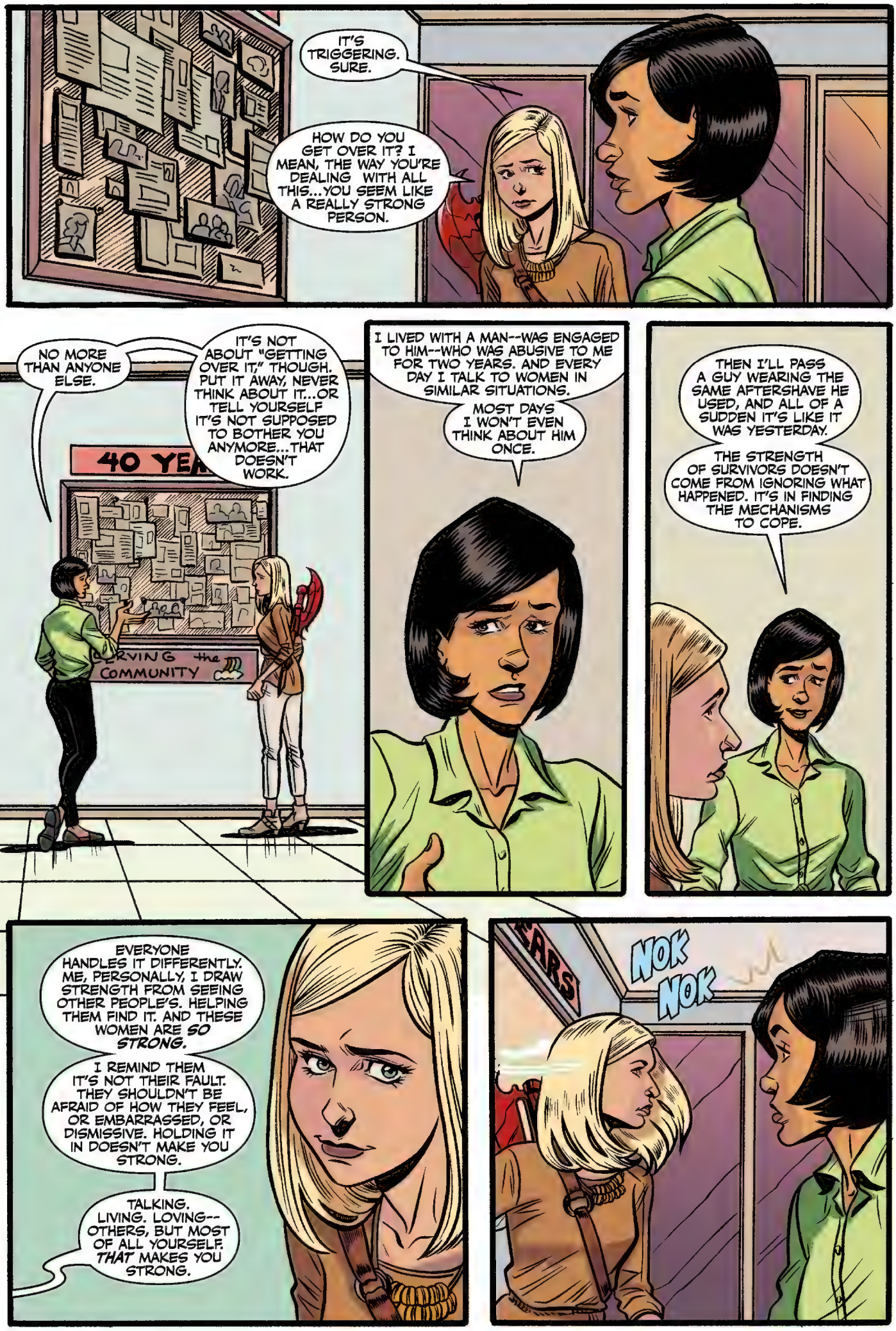
OKAY, EARLIER TODAY SHE WAS JUST TALKING IN WEIRD VOICES.
AN EXPERIENCED PSYCHIC WOULD BE MORE RESISTANT. THIS WOMAN TAMPERED WITH FORCES SHE SHOULD NOT HAVE AND BECAME EASY PREY FOR DARK ENTITIES FROM BEYOND.
GET BACK. I'LL PERFORM THE EXORCISM.
YOU'LL DO NOTHING BUT DIE, TIDBIT!
ECTOPLASM. I HATE ECTOPLASM!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE-- USE THE HOLY WATER!
NO ONE INVITED YOU, BITCH.
YOU-- CAN SEE ME?

XANDER! HELP!
THERE'S ANOTHER PRESENCE HERE! POSSIBLY THE VICTIM'S ASTRAL FORM. HURRY! WE MUST STRIKE WHILE IT'S DISTRACTED!
HERE. STAY HYDRATED.
HAAOOOO
SSSS
EXORCIZAMUS TE, OMNIS IMMUNDUS SPIRITUS...
HNGH!
XANDER!
HANG ON!

GOTCHA.
GLORIA PATRI!
SSS
UNNH...
CATCH HER!
THAT WASN'T NECESSARY, XANDER. THE DEMON WAS CLEARLY PULLING THE VICTIM'S ASTRAL FORM INTO HER BODY. THAT'S WHERE IT BELONGS.
YEAH, UH...JUST DOTTING THE T'S AND CROSSING THE I'S, Y'KNOW.
Z--ZUH...
XANDER HARRIS...
THE SOUL OF ANYA JENKINS IS AT REST.
THIS PRESENCE... THAT BELIEVES IT IS HER... IS NOT...

I'M SORRY, WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
MNUH...?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, AND WHY ARE YOU TOUCHING MY BOOB?
GAH! SORRY!
NO, YOU IDIOT, DON'T DROP--
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE. WHAT DID SHE SAY THAT'S GOT YOU SO WORKED UP?
OH...
WHUMP
NOTHING. I THOUGHT SHE WAS GIVING ME NEXT WEEK'S LOTTERY NUMBERS, THAT'S ALL. C'MON, LET'S GO.
YOU PEOPLE ARE ALL SO SUED.


THE WOMEN'S CENTER
SERVING the COMMUNITY
WHERE'S YOUR PARTNER? THE BLOND GUY?
CANVASSING THE MISSION DISTRICT. TRYING TO FIND THE INCUBUS BEFORE HE FIGURES OUT WE'RE ONTO HIM AND SKIPS TOWN. BUT HE COULD ALSO COME BACK HERE.
HE KILLS MOST VICTIMS OUTRIGHT. BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE A SPECIAL GRUDGE AGAINST WOMEN WHO HELP OTHER WOMEN. LIKES TO MAKE THEM SUFFER A WHILE.
HOW MANY HAS HE KILLED?
HARD TO SAY. MOST OF THE DEATHS WERE RECORDED AS NATURAL. A FEW VICTIMS REPORTED ASSAULTS NOT LONG BEFORE...BUT THE CASES WERE DROPPED.
OF COURSE. I CAN HEAR THE INVESTIGATING OFFICERS NOW. "SO YOU LET HIM IN? HE DIDN'T PHYSICALLY FORCE YOU OR THREATEN YOU? HONEY, REGRET ISN'T RAPE."
IF NOT FOR WHAT I DO, I'M NOT SURE I WOULD'VE REPORTED IT. IF I HADN'T SEEN THAT PICTURE, AND SUPERNATURAL STUFF WASN'T ALL OVER THE TV...GETTING ANYONE TO BELIEVE ME--
YOU GOT LUCKY.
SORRY. HORRIBLE THING TO SAY. I JUST MEANT, COMPARED TO THE OTHERS--
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEANT. NO HARM DONE.
YOU SAID YOU WERE A SURVIVOR. THIS MUST BE DOUBLY TOUGH FOR YOU.
BRINGING BACK A LOT OF...BAD MEMORIES.

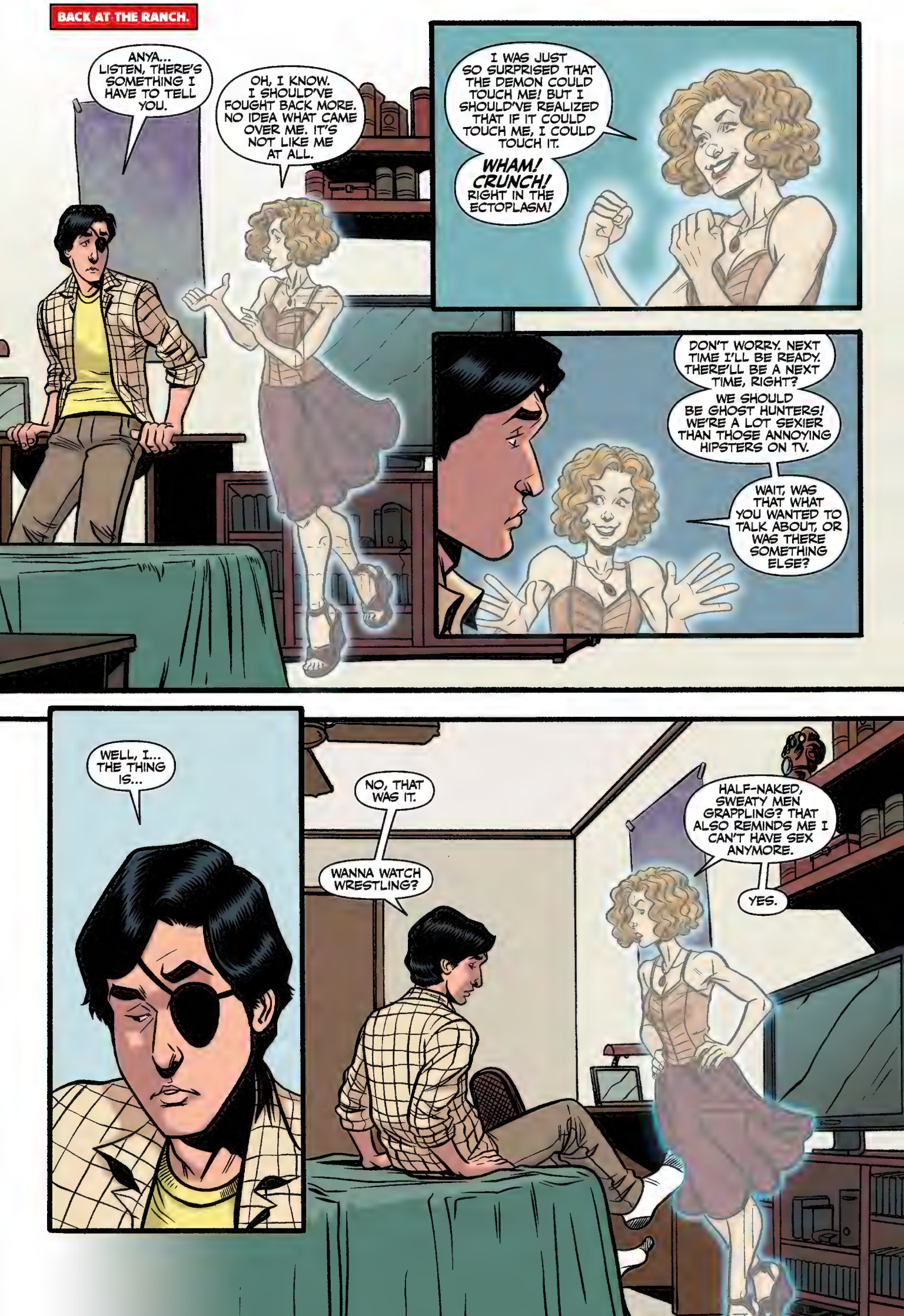

IT'S TRIGGERING. SURE.
HOW DO YOU GET OVER IT? I MEAN, THE WAY YOU'RE DEALING WITH ALL THIS...YOU SEEM LIKE A REALLY STRONG PERSON.
NO MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE.
IT'S NOT ABOUT "GETTING OVER IT," THOUGH. PUT IT AWAY, NEVER THINK ABOUT IT...OR TELL YOURSELF IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BOTHER YOU ANYMORE...THAT DOESN'T WORK.
40 YEA
ERVING the COMMUNITY
I LIVED WITH A MAN--WAS ENGAGED TO HIM--WHO WAS ABUSIVE TO ME FOR TWO YEARS. AND EVERY DAY I TALK TO WOMEN IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS.
MOST DAYS I WON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT HIM ONCE.
THEN I'LL PASS A GUY WEARING THE SAME AFTERSHAVE HE USED, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN IT'S LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY.
THE STRENGTH OF SURVIVORS DOESN'T COME FROM IGNORING WHAT HAPPENED. IT'S IN FINDING THE MECHANISMS TO COPE.
EVERYONE HANDLES IT DIFFERENTLY. ME, PERSONALLY, I DRAW STRENGTH FROM SEEING OTHER PEOPLE'S. HELPING THEM FIND IT. AND THESE WOMEN ARE *SO STRONG.*
I REMIND THEM IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT. THEY SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF HOW THEY FEEL, OR EMBARRASSED, OR DISMISSIVE. HOLDING IT IN DOESN'T MAKE YOU STRONG.
TALKING. LIVING. LOVING--OTHERS, BUT MOST OF ALL YOURSELF. *THAT* MAKES YOU STRONG.
ARS
NOK NOK

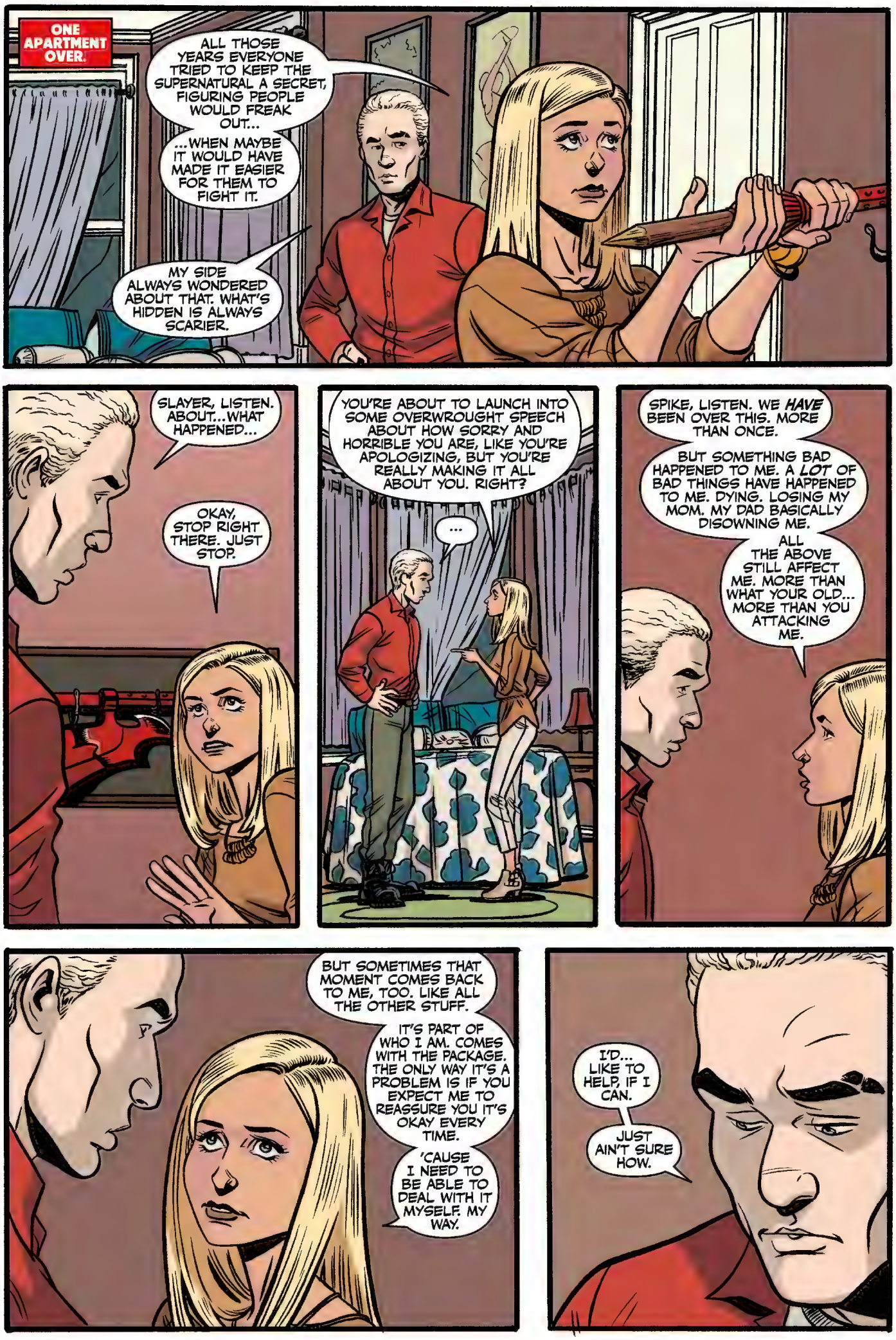
HELLO, LITTLE PIGS.
UNLOCK THE DOOR AND LET ME IN.
GO IN YOUR OFFICE. LOCK THE DOOR AND CALL THE POLICE. I'VE GOT THIS.
I ASKED NICELY. STOP IGNORING ME.
OPEN THE DOOR.
NOW.

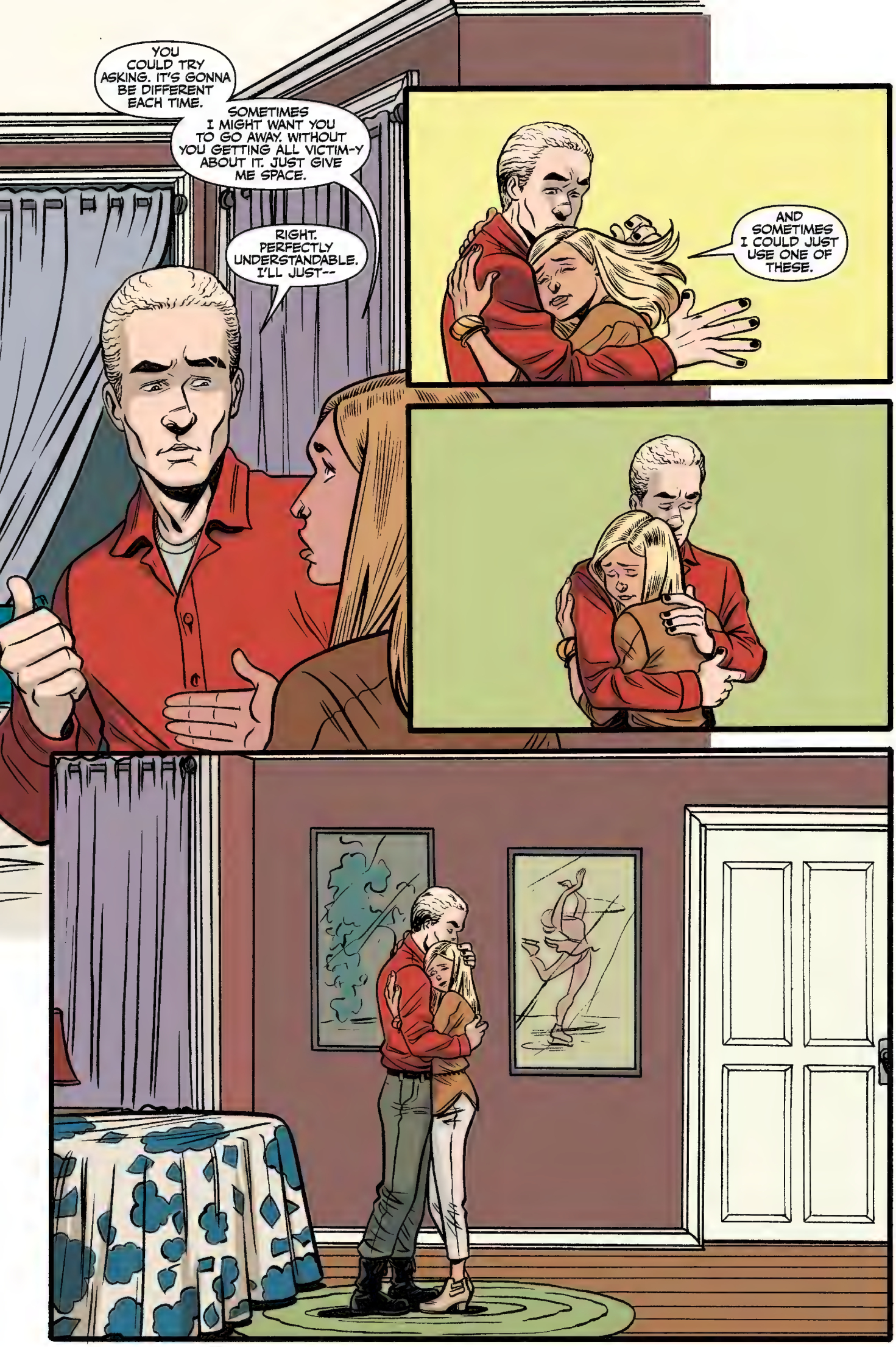
MUCH BETTER. YOU DID A FINE JOB TRYING TO FIGHT ME, SLAYER, BUT THIS WAS INEVITABLE. OH YES, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I'VE BEEN *WATCHING* YOU.
YOU MIGHT'VE HAD A CHANCE IF YOUR VAMPIRE FRIEND WERE HERE. I HAVE A MUCH HARDER TIME INFLUENCING MEN...ESPECIALLY UNDEAD ONES. BUT YOU SENT HIM AWAY.
BECAUSE YOU WERE CONVINCED YOU COULD DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF. BECAUSE IT NEVER OCCURRED TO YOU I MIGHT BE ONTO YOU.
BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD HANDLE ME...THAT YOU WERE *BETTER* THAN ME.
OR WAS IT BECAUSE, DEEP DOWN WHERE ONLY YOU KNOW IT...
...YOU WANTED THIS?
OH, SHE DID.

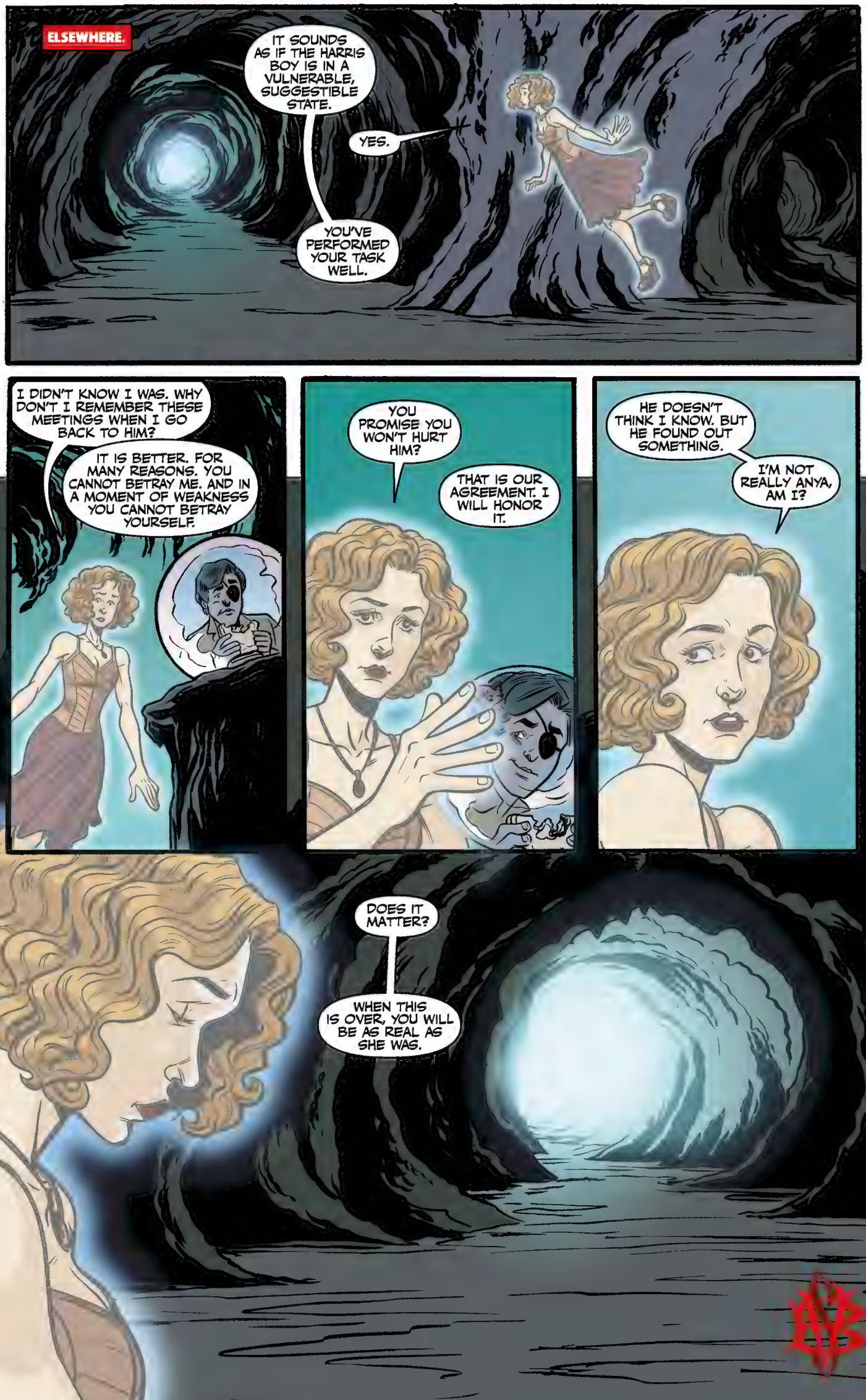
WE ALL WANTED THIS, MATE.
KRSHH
N-NO--STAY BACK--
HERE'S A "BECAUSE" YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF, SLEAZOID.
BECAUSE WE WERE SETTING A TRAP.
SHNKK

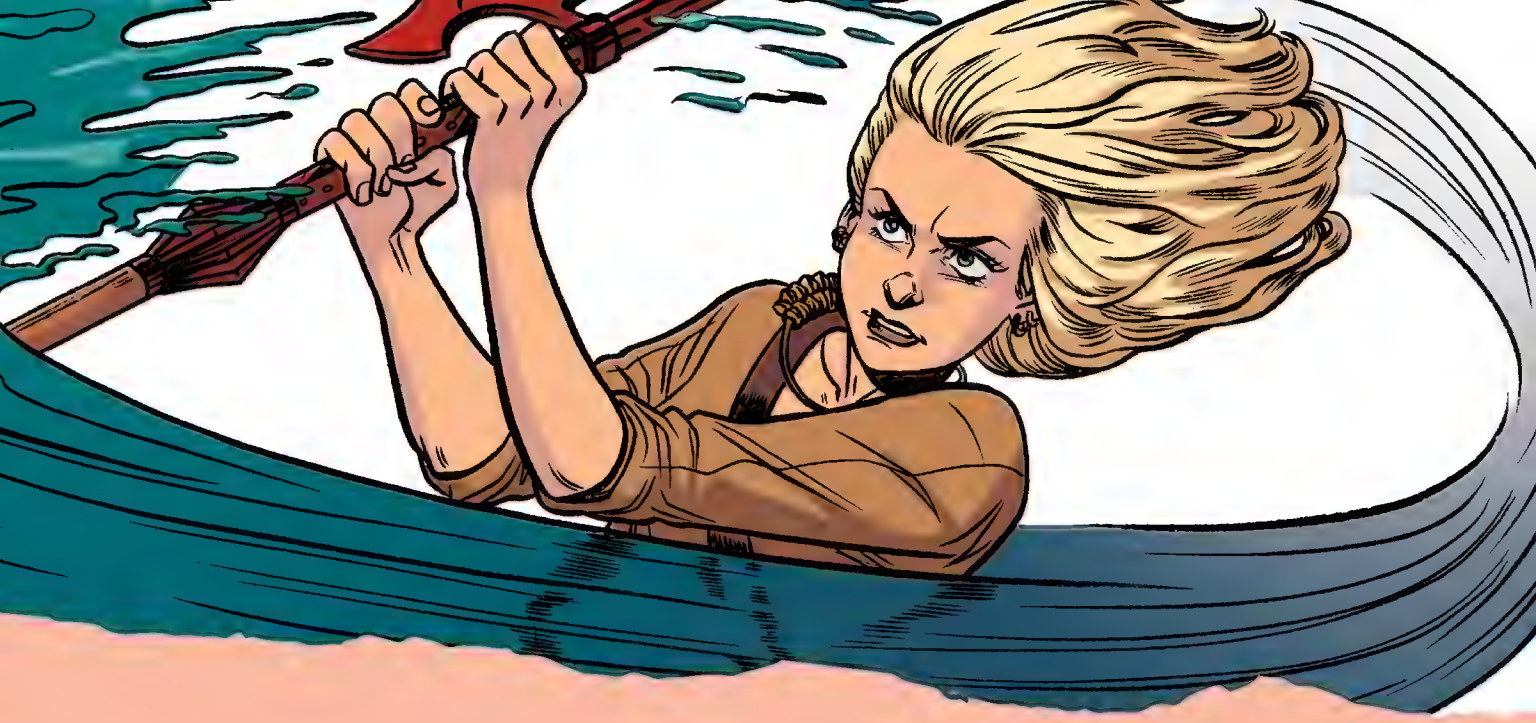
UGH. I THOUGHT THEY CRUMBLED TO DUST WHEN YOU KILLED THEM.
THAT WOULD BE ME.
HE WASN'T HUMAN, IF THAT HELPS.
YEAH, THE LACK OF BLOOD AND WEIRD INTERNAL ORGANS KINDA GAVE ME THAT IDEA. NO, I'M OKAY. I WAS JUST THINKING...
IT SOUNDS WEIRD TO SAY THIS ABOUT A MONSTER THAT CAUSED SO MUCH PAIN AND DEATH AND SUFFERING, BUT...IN THE END, ONCE WE WERE READY FOR HIM, HE WASN'T ALL THAT TOUGH.
A LOT OF THESE THINGS COUNT ON THE SHADOWS. THEY LIKED IT WHEN PEOPLE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THEM.
WERE AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT THEM 'CAUSE THEY'D BE MADE FUN OF OR CALLED CRAZY.
NEW RULES NOW.


BACK AT THE RANCH.
ANYA... LISTEN, THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO TELL YOU.
OH, I KNOW. I SHOULD'VE FOUGHT BACK MORE. NO IDEA WHAT CAME OVER ME. IT'S NOT LIKE ME AT ALL.
I WAS JUST SO SURPRISED THAT THE DEMON COULD TOUCH ME! BUT I SHOULD'VE REALIZED THAT IF IT COULD TOUCH ME, I COULD TOUCH IT.
WHAM! CRUNCH! RIGHT IN THE ECTOPLASM!
DON'T WORRY. NEXT TIME I'LL BE READY. THERE'LL BE A NEXT TIME, RIGHT?
WE SHOULD BE GHOST HUNTERS! WE'RE A LOT SEXIER THAN THOSE ANNOYING HIPSTERS ON TV.
WAIT, WAS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED TO TALK ABOUT, OR WAS THERE SOMETHING ELSE?
WELL, I... THE THING IS...
NO, THAT WAS IT.
WANNA WATCH WRESTLING?
HALF-NAKED, SWEATY MEN GRAPPLING? THAT ALSO REMINDS ME I CAN'T HAVE SEX ANYMORE.
YES.


ONE APARTMENT OVER.
ALL THOSE YEARS EVERYONE TRIED TO KEEP THE SUPERNATURAL A SECRET, FIGURING PEOPLE WOULD FREAK OUT...
...WHEN MAYBE IT WOULD HAVE MADE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO FIGHT IT.
MY SIDE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT THAT. WHAT'S HIDDEN IS ALWAYS SCARIER.
SLAYER, LISTEN. ABOUT...WHAT HAPPENED...
OKAY, STOP RIGHT THERE. JUST STOP.
YOU'RE ABOUT TO LAUNCH INTO SOME OVERWROUGHT SPEECH ABOUT HOW SORRY AND HORRIBLE YOU ARE, LIKE YOU'RE APOLOGIZING, BUT YOU'RE REALLY MAKING IT ALL ABOUT YOU. RIGHT?
...
SPIKE, LISTEN. WE *HAVE* BEEN OVER THIS. MORE THAN ONCE.
BUT SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO ME. A *LOT* OF BAD THINGS HAVE HAPPENED TO ME. DYING. LOSING MY MOM. MY DAD BASICALLY DISOWNING ME.
ALL THE ABOVE STILL AFFECT ME. MORE THAN WHAT YOUR OLD... MORE THAN YOU ATTACKING ME.
BUT SOMETIMES THAT MOMENT COMES BACK TO ME, TOO. LIKE ALL THE OTHER STUFF.
IT'S PART OF WHO I AM. COMES WITH THE PACKAGE. THE ONLY WAY IT'S A PROBLEM IS IF YOU EXPECT ME TO REASSURE YOU IT'S OKAY EVERY TIME.
'CAUSE I NEED TO BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT MYSELF. MY WAY.
I'D... LIKE TO HELP, IF I CAN.
JUST AIN'T SURE HOW.


YOU COULD TRY ASKING. IT'S GONNA BE DIFFERENT EACH TIME.
SOMETIMES I MIGHT WANT YOU TO GO AWAY. WITHOUT YOU GETTING ALL VICTIM-Y ABOUT IT. JUST GIVE ME SPACE.
RIGHT. PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE. I'LL JUST--
AND SOMETIMES I COULD JUST USE ONE OF THESE.


ELSEWHERE
IT SOUNDS AS IF THE HARRIS BOY IS IN A VULNERABLE, SUGGESTIBLE STATE.
YES.
YOU'VE PERFORMED YOUR TASK WELL.
I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS. WHY DON'T I REMEMBER THESE MEETINGS WHEN I GO BACK TO HIM?
IT IS BETTER. FOR MANY REASONS. YOU CANNOT BETRAY ME. AND IN A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS YOU CANNOT BETRAY YOURSELF.
YOU PROMISE YOU WON'T HURT HIM?
THAT IS OUR AGREEMENT. I WILL HONOR IT.
HE DOESN'T THINK I KNOW. BUT HE FOUND OUT SOMETHING.
I'M NOT REALLY ANYA, AM I?
DOES IT MATTER?
WHEN THIS IS OVER, YOU WILL BE AS REAL AS SHE WAS.



Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #11, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.

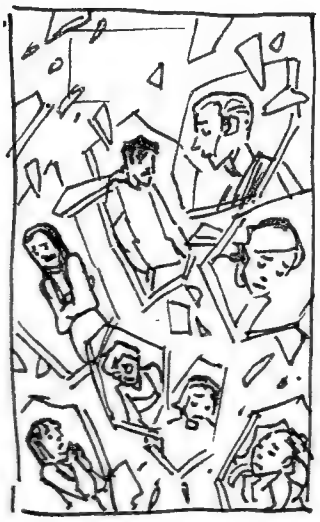
SEASON 10 SKETCHBOOK & COVER GALLERY

Variant cover pencils and thumbnail sketches for *Buffy* Season 10 #11 by Rebekah Isaacs. The "Love Dares You" storyline had so much happening with relationships, we set Rebekah with the task of representing that on the issue #11 variant cover. As you can see, we went with the "Yay, Love!" option that she provided—we all know how swiftly love changes in the Buffyverse . . .

A

Yay, Love!

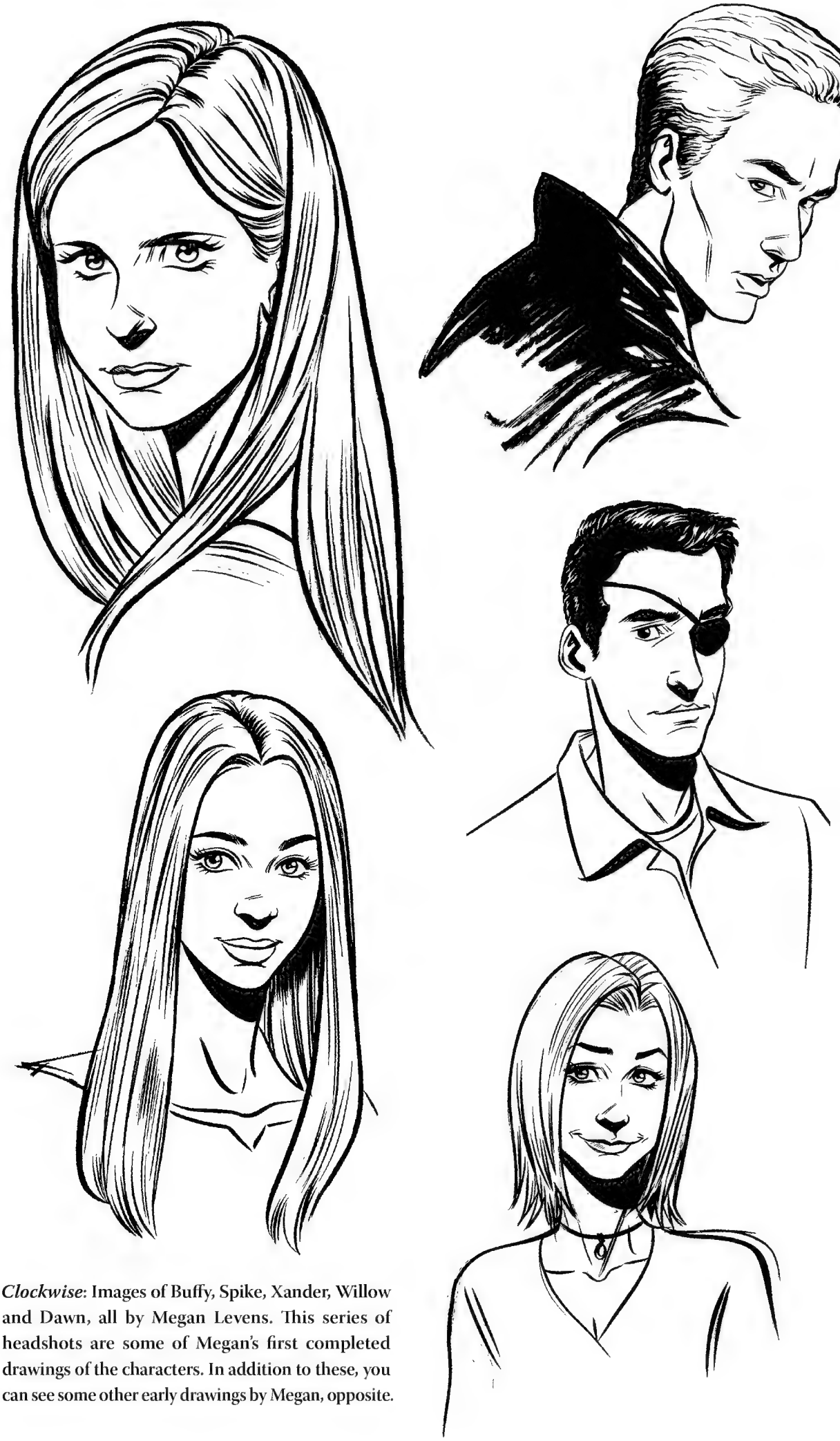
Top: Spike & Buffy
Left: Willow & Aluwyn
Right: Xander & Dawn
Bottom: Olivia shocked as she realizes who Kid Giles is.



B

Love Sux!

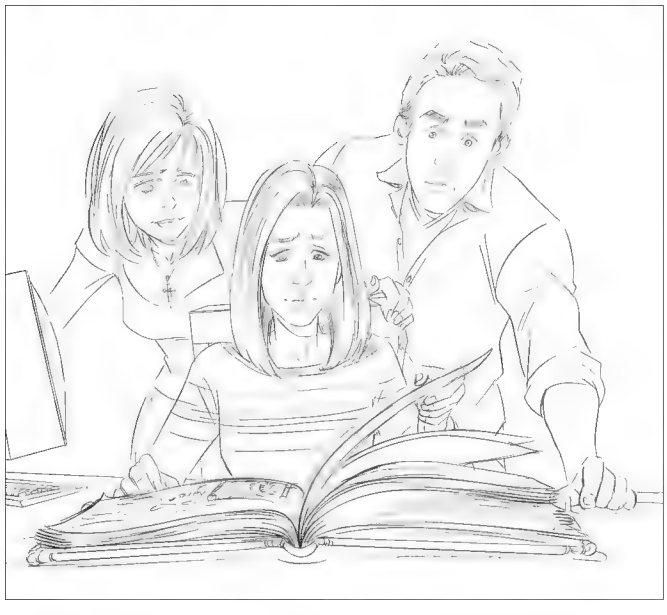
All the couples broken apart in shards of glass.

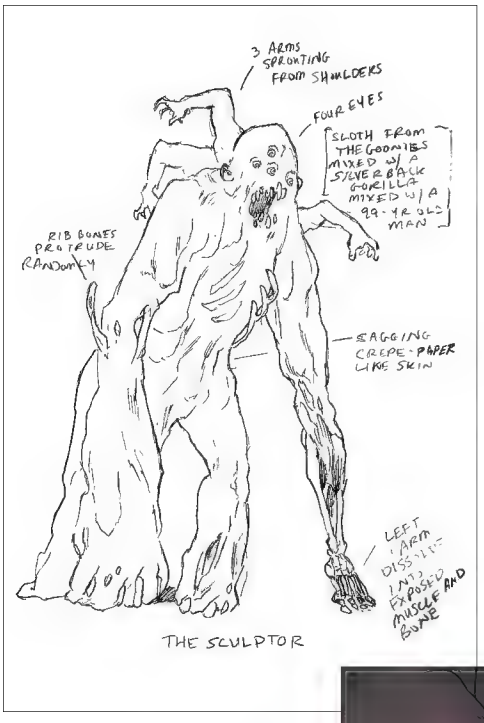


Clockwise: Images of Buffy, Spike, Xander, Willow and Dawn, all by Megan Levens. This series of headshots are some of Megan's first completed drawings of the characters. In addition to these, you can see some other early drawings by Megan, opposite.

A pinup piece featuring Buffy and Angel, by Megan Levens.

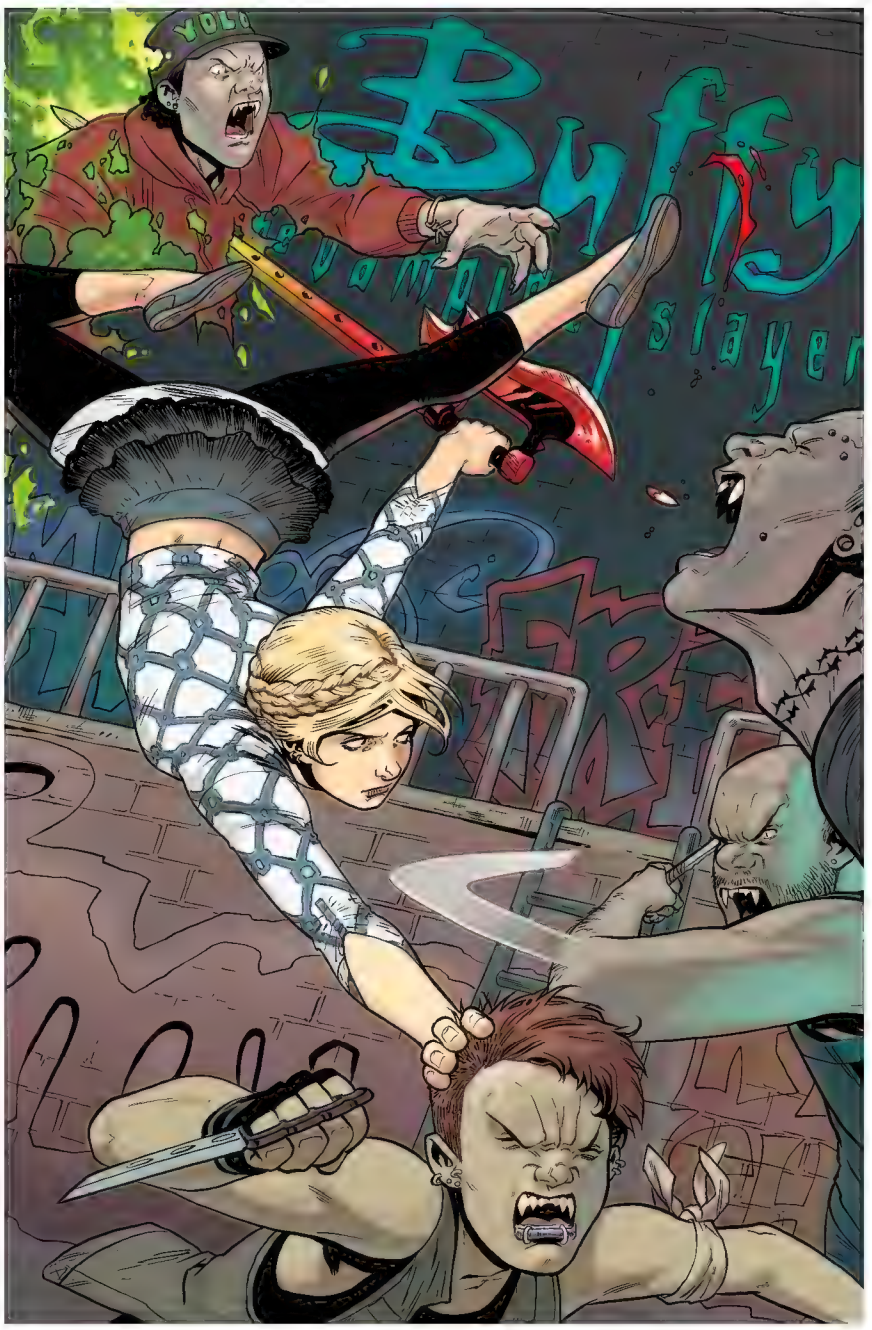
To the right:
Drawing of the young high-school age—Season 2—Scooby gang, by Megan Levens.

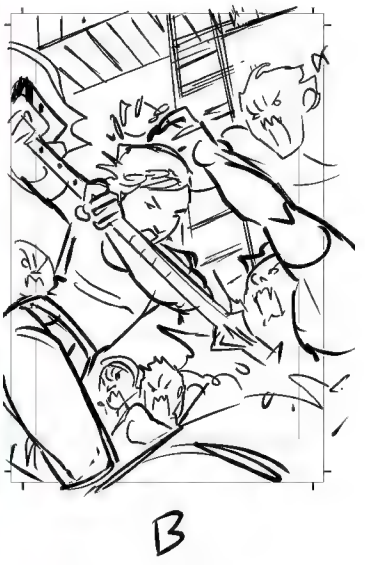




Rebekah's design for one among a trio of new Big Bads in Season 10, the Sculptor. This nefarious character uses human body parts to make up his revolting physique.

To the right:
Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #12, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson. The Scoobies are struggling in a mass of the Sculptor's flesh—yuck!





Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #13, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.

To the right:
Thumbnail sketches for this cover, all showing Buffy doing her do, and kicking vampire butt! Sometimes choosing between the thumbnail sketch options is *really* difficult . . .

Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #15, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson. We couldn't resist a Spike vs. Spike cover when the storyline turned to Spike having to fight against his vampire side to defeat Archaeus.

To the right:
Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #14, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson. A cover celebrating all the male Scoobies—and Giles's new obsession with video-games, of course.

Rebekah Isaacs's designs for the Big Bad, Archaeus. He was established in the *Buffy* comics, but became the primary threat in *Angel & Faith* Season 10. Archaeus has a special relationship with vampires Angel, Spike, and Drusilla: he's the demon that inhabits each of them (in part) and in Season 10 he was eager to unite—and influence—his "family."

For the long-awaited crossover of *Buffy* and *Angel & Faith*, we made a small event of our issue #16 covers—Angel is fighting alongside Buffy and the Scoobies in this spread image.

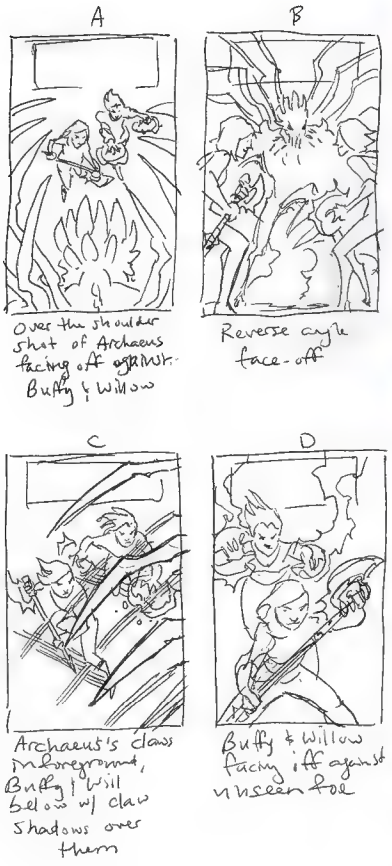
Left:
Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #16, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.

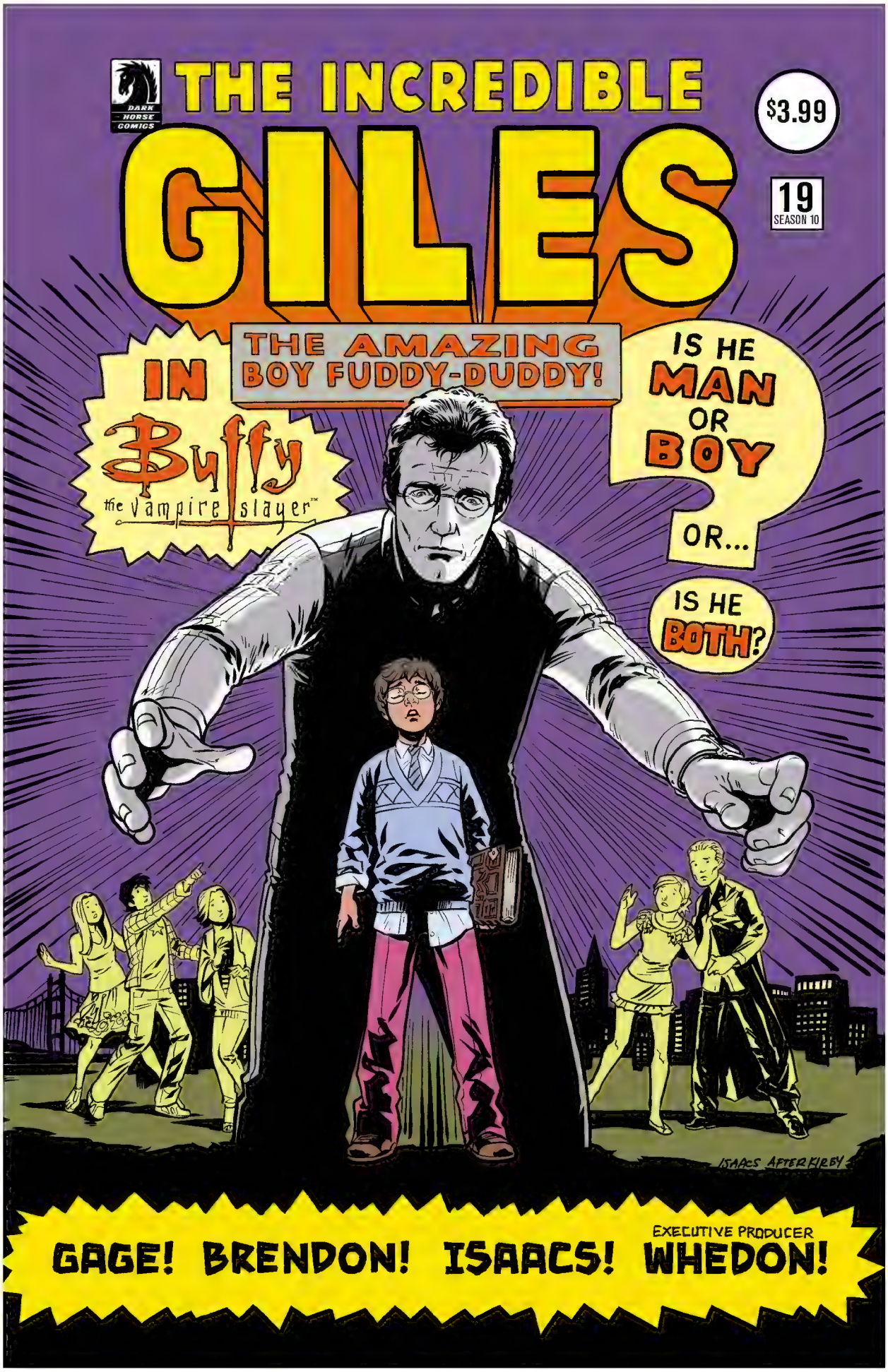
Right:
Standard cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #16, by Steve Morris.

Variant cover art for Buffy Season 10 #18, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.
Who could resist a cover with Buffy, new beau Spike, and ex-beau Angel?

Below:
Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #17, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.

Left and below left:
Thumbnail sketches and beautiful pencils for this cover by Rebekah Isaacs. You can see that we were looking at the Slayer and her bestie facing off against Archaeus, but a straight-up cover with Buffy and Willow ready to rumble won the day.





Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #19, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson, and design by Justin Couch. After the 1962 cover to *The Incredible Hulk* #1 by Jack Kirby.

Variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 #20, by Rebekah Isaacs with Dan Jackson.

Cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 Volume 3: *Love Dares You,* by Steve Morris.

Cover art for *Buffy* Season 10 Volume 4: *Old Demons,* by Steve Morris.

A *Buffy* Season 10 #11 variant cover, especially for Buffy's birthday, by Georges Jeanty with Tariq Hassan.

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, producer, and director **JOSS WHEDON** began writing feature films and acting as a "script doctor" in the 1990s. He introduced the character for which he is most well known in his script for the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film (1992).

In 1997 Whedon founded Mutant Enemy Productions so that he could coproduce the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series ran from 1997 to 2003, giving birth to Whedon's cult-like fan following, and led to a spinoff series, *Angel*, as well as comics series based on both shows. In 2002, Whedon produced and wrote the television series *Firefly*, which eventually led to a feature film titled *Serenity* (2005), as well as more comics. In 2008, Whedon produced and cowrote, with his brothers Zack and Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen, the Emmy-winning online series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—again leading to a comics series. Also alongside Jed Whedon and Tancharoen, Whedon produced the television show *Dollhouse*, which premiered in 2009. His most recently produced television work, which he cocreated with Jed Whedon and Tancharoen in 2013, is Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* He wrote and directed one of the most ambitious and successful feature films to date: *The Avengers*, based on the Marvel Comics superhero team, along with its sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. He also directed, produced, and composed original music for a film adaptation of the Shakespeare play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

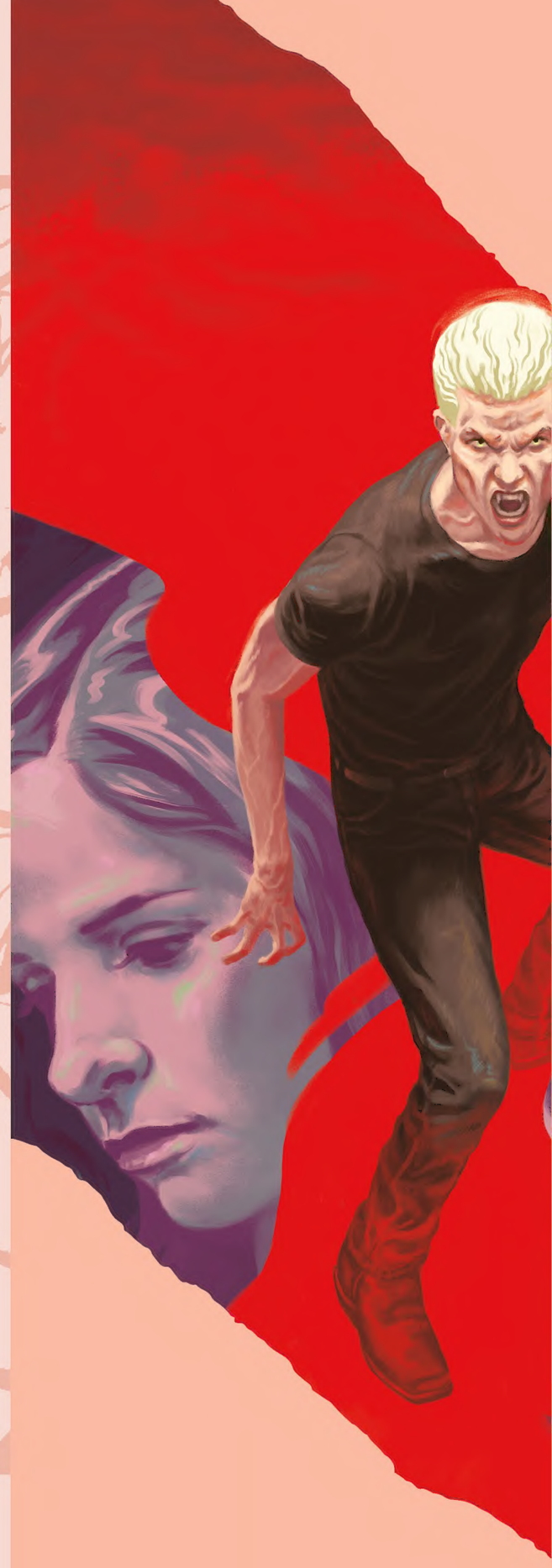
Comics written by Whedon include *Fray* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Seasons 8 and 9, and *Sugarshock*, all for Dark Horse Comics, and *Runaways* and *Astonishing X-Men* for Marvel Comics. Currently he is co-writing both a *Buffy* spin-off series featuring the character Giles with writer Erika Alexander, and *Buffy* Season 12 with writer Christos Gage.

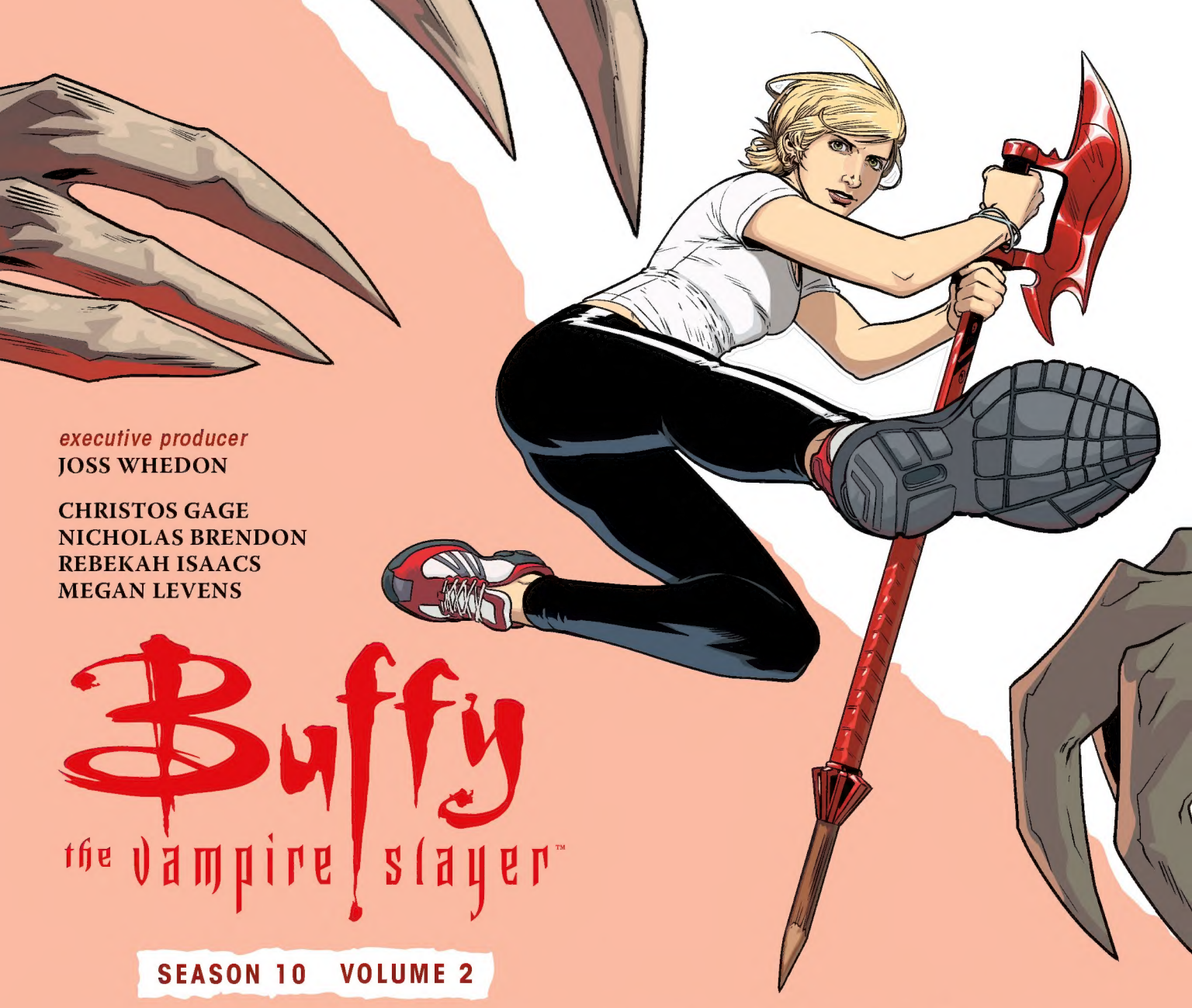
NICHOLAS BRENDON is an American writer and actor. He is best known for playing the character Xander Harris in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series (1997–2003). He has played a variety of television and movie roles over the years, including notable television roles on CBS's *Criminal Minds*, ABC's *Private Practice*, and Fox's *Kitchen Confidential*. In 2014, Brendon began working with Christos Gage in co-writing several issues of the *Buffy* Season 10 comics series, contributing in particular to issues that focused on Brendon's character, Xander.

New York Times bestselling author **CHRISTOS GAGE** is a writer of comics, television, movies, graphic novels, and video games. In addition to writing the award–nominated *Angel & Faith*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Seasons 10, 11, and currently, 12, for Dark Horse Comics, he has provided scripts for a number of comics publishers, comics titles including *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Iron Man*, *Avengers Academy*, and graphic novels including *Area 10*, and *Sunset*. Gage has written for a variety of televisions shows, including *Daredevil*, *Law & Order: SVU*, and *Numb3rs*. His resume of film titles include *The Breed*, and *Paradox*, and his video games include Marvel's *Spider-Man*, and *Captain America: Super Soldier*. Gage is a graduate of Brown University and the American Film Institute, from which he received a master's in screenwriting. He often collaborates with his wife, Ruth Fletcher Gage.

Artist **REBEKAH ISAACS**, a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, got her start in comics drawing *The After Hours* for the *Twilight Zone* series of graphic novels from Walker & Co. Soon after, she began as a guest artist on *Hack/Slash* for Devil's Due Publishing before working as a series artist on *Drafted* (Desperado/IDW Publishing) and a *Sheena* miniseries for Devil's Due. Her first mainstream work was a fill-in issue of *Ms. Marvel* with writer Brian Reed for Marvel Comics, immediately followed by WildStorm Comics' miniseries revival of *DV8: Gods and Monsters* with writer Brian Wood. Since then, she has worked on titles including *DMZ* (Vertigo/DC Comics), *Magus* (12 Gauge Comics), and *Captain America and the Falcon* (Marvel). She began her work in illustrating the Buffyverse with *Angel & Faith* and continued as series artist on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Seasons 10 and, most recently, Season 11. A native of Dahlonega, Georgia, Rebekah now lives in New York. She loves Leia Organa, Bowie, and all the cats in the world.

MEGAN LEVENS is a comic book artist best known for her work on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 10 for Dark Horse Comics, and her collaborations with writer Jamie S. Rich on Image Comics' *Madame Frankenstein*, and Oni Press's *Ares & Aphrodite*. She has also contributed to several Vertigo anthologies, including the finale of *Fables*, and illustrated *Spell on Wheels* with Kate Leth and Marissa Louise—also for Dark Horse. Most recently she has worked for IDW Publishing on *Star Trek* and *Back to the Future*. Megan is owned by a Boston Terrier and a grumpy old cat, who live with her in Kansas City.





executive producer
JOSS WHEDON

CHRISTOS GAGE
NICHOLAS BRENDON
REBEKAH ISAACS
MEGAN LEVENS

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 10 VOLUME 2

Creator Joss Whedon's television series continues in comics, where this crew that fights the forces of darkness is currently dealing with real demons *and* personal ones . . .

Writing the new rules of magic seems to be under control, but the romantic scene for Buffy and her friends has amped up in unexpected ways. But as always, personal lives are soon put aside to deal with demons. Andrew discovers some inner strength and battles a new demon on the San Francisco scene, the Sculptor. And when Spike is plagued by vivid dreams of murder, Buffy journeys into the deepest recesses of his mind to discover the terrifying new face of evil: Archaeus. Needing backup to confront the Big Bad, Buffy calls in reinforcements—even though it's awkward to see Angel again, there is a job to be done. But as the Scoobies zero in on the Big Bad, the extent of his power and his plans—and their connection to the new rules of magic—are revealed. Buffy is faced with figuring out how to keep her alive friends alive, and her undead friends . . . undead.

Writers Christos Gage (*The Amazing Spider-Man*) and *Buffy* star Nicholas Brendon team with artists Rebekah Isaacs (*Angel & Faith*) and Megan Levens (*Spell on Wheels*, *Star Trek: Waypoint*) to take on *all* the supernatural drama of *Buffy*'s tenth season!

This Library edition collects the third and fourth arcs of* Buffy *Season 10 and includes an expanded sketchbook section.

"[*BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*] IS STILL AS AWESOME AS EVER."
—Unleash the Fanboy

"*Buffy* Season 10 has been a consistently good ride and a brilliantly developed series."
—Bloody Disgusting

"In this current series we've got some fun times ahead."
—Comic Book Resources

"The creative team has made Buffy's life and cast of characters fresh and fun in ways that I had forgotten they could be."
—Major Spoilers

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